# Chronicles

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# THE TWO CULTURES

## *can this marriage be saved?*

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# IS THE CURRICULUM BIASED?

## A Statement by the National Association of Scholars

American higher education is facing widespread demands to eliminate the allegedly "Eurocentric" and "patriarchal" bias of the curriculum. While the details vary from campus to campus, these demands tend to focus on four objectives:

- *that the "canon" be revised to include more works by blacks, other ethnic minorities, and women;*
- *that "the issues of race, gender, and class" be introduced into a greater variety of courses;*
- *that more courses in women's studies and minority studies be developed;*
- *that courses in women's studies and/or minority studies be required of all undergraduates.*

Various justifications are commonly proffered for making these changes. It is alleged that:

- *works by minorities, women, and Third World authors have been excluded from the curriculum;*
- *minority and female students feel alienated and their educational progress is retarded by being asked to study works primarily by white males;*
- *in order to overcome their own prejudices, white males must become acquainted with the cultures and problems of minorities and with the perspectives and problems of women;*
- *the traditional curriculum represents the hegemony of Western culture, covertly supports a status quo inherently oppressive of women and minorities, and is unfairly imposed on students from different cultures;*
- *the traditional desiderata of truth, objectivity, and critical intelligence can be met only by adding the perspectives of women and minorities and by facing up to the new questions they raise;*
- *an increasingly diverse society and interdependent world require that our citizens gain greater understanding of different cultures.*

The **National Association of Scholars** *disputes* the first five of these arguments and believes that the last entails something other than the changes being proposed.

**First**, any work, whether formerly neglected or widely known, should be added, retained, or removed from the curriculum on the basis of its conformance to generally applicable intellectual and aesthetic standards. A sound curriculum cannot be built by replacing those standards with the principle of proportional representation of authors, classified ethnically, biologically, or geographically.

**Second**, the idea that students will be discouraged by not encountering more works by members of their own race, sex, or ethnic group, even were it substantiated, would not justify adding inferior works. Such paternalism conveys a message opposite to the one desired.

**Third**, other cultures, minority subcultures, and social problems have long been studied in the liberal arts curriculum in such established disciplines as history, literature, comparative religion, economics, political science, anthropology, and sociology. But more important, mere acquaintance with differences does not guarantee tolerance, an ideal Western in origin and fostered by knowledge of what is common to us all.

**Fourth**, the idea that the traditional curriculum "excludes" the contributions of all but males of European descent is patently false. From their beginnings, Western art and science have drawn upon the achievements of non-Western societies and since have been absorbed and further enriched by peoples around the globe. That the liberal arts oppress minorities and women is yet more ludicrous. Even if the curriculum were confined to thought strictly European in origin, it would still present a rich variety of conflicting ideas, including the very concepts of equality and freedom from oppression invoked by those who would reorient the curriculum.

**Fifth**, while diversity of background is valuable to the discussion of issues to which those differences are germane, objectivity is in general not enhanced but subverted by the idea that people of different sexes, races, or ethnic backgrounds necessarily see things differently. The assertion that cognition is determined by group membership is itself an example of stereotypic thinking which undermines the possibility of a true community of discourse.

**Sixth**, the study of the traditions and achievements of other nations and of ethnic subcultures is important and should be encouraged. But this must proceed in a manner that is intellectually honest and does not serve as a pretext for inserting polemics into the curriculum. Furthermore, "multicultural education" should not take place at the expense of studies that transcend cultural differences: the truths of mathematics, the sciences, history, and so on, are not different for people of different races, sexes, or cultures, and for that reason alone their study is liberating. Nor should we further attenuate the study of the traditions of the West. Not only is knowledge of those traditions essential for any evaluation of our own institutions, it is increasingly relevant to our understanding of other nations, which, in striking testament to the universality of the values they embody, are rapidly adapting Western practices to their own situations.

The **National Association of Scholars** is in favor of ethnic studies, the study of non-Western cultures, and the study of the special problems of women and minorities in our society, but it opposes subordinating entire humanities and social science curricula to such studies and it views with alarm their growing politicization. Efforts purportedly made to introduce "other points of view" and "pluralism" often seem in fact designed to restrict attention to a narrow set of issues, tendentiously defined. An examination of many women's studies and minority studies courses and programs discloses little study of other cultures and much excoriation of our society for its alleged oppression of women, blacks, and others. The banner of "cultural diversity" is apparently being raised by some whose paramount interest actually lies in attacking the West and its institutions.

*We urge our colleagues to demand clear explanations and cogent arguments in support of the proposals being so rapidly brought before them, and to reject any that cannot be justified. The curriculum is and should be open to change, but we must rebut the false charges being made against existing disciplines. We must also reject the allegations of "racism" and "sexism" that are frequently leveled against honest critics of the new proposals, and which only have the effect of stifling much-needed debate.*

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Copies of this statement or additional information about the **National Association of Scholars** and its activities, including its Fellows Program, Research Center, Speakers Bureau, state and regional affiliates, conferences, local membership events, executive and faculty search services, and its quarterly *Academic Questions*, may be obtained by writing to the **National Association of Scholars, Suite 250 East, Twenty Nassau Street, Princeton, NJ 08542**, or by calling **609-683-7878**.

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

*"The world was made to be inhabited by beasts, but studied and contemplated by man: tis the debt of our reason we own unto God and the homage we pay for not being beasts."*
—Sir Thomas Browne

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## On 'A Gildered Cage'

Charlotte Low Allen's review of George Gilder's *Microcosm* (January 1990) seems to miss the book's most obvious point. Perhaps that is because it is Allen's purpose to attack Gilder's message. She is a member of the revolt against the microcosm, a revolt widespread across the political spectrum.

*Microcosm* dives into an esoteric technology to uncover how that technology was advanced. It reveals the emergence of a powerful law of nature now at work in our world, one that has already changed us in ways we do not fully comprehend, yet one whose true impact has only begun to be felt. As Carver Mead puts it in the book's preface, "Listen to the technology and find out what it is telling you." That means burrowing into the subatomic realm, where a world is uncovered that defies our senses.

The discovery and application of quantum principles "converge in one epochal event, the overthrow of matter," that is, materialism. The central feature is the law of the microcosm: decisions, and thus power, rather than being pushed up through a hierarchy, are pulled "remorselessly down to the individual."

Allen perceives Gilder's law of the microcosm as a metaphor, perhaps a justification for unbridled capitalism and globalism. But the dynamics of the microcosm bear witness to capitalism's most prominent feature: capitalism is a mind-centered system where laws of thought supercede the laws of matter, where ideas can be implemented, tested, and used to free us from the constraints of the material world.

The technology resulting from the application of quantum theory is now catapulting us into an "information age." The microprocessor is empowering individuals and unleasing human creativity even as it renders natural resources and material wealth less valuable every year. Value-added is coming to mean ideas, whether they be in the more than ninety thousand lines of computer code imbedded in the 1990 Lincoln Continental or the details of a computer-aided engineering design for a jet engine.

Throughout history, wealth and power have accrued to those who controlled physical resources, power flowing from the top down. The law of the microcosm, which works in the opposite direction to the usual laws of matter, is destroying superfluous hierarchy and unnatural barriers. Just as it is cutting a swath through General Motors, it is felling the Berlin Wall and making obsolete merchantilist trade policies designed to protect physical assets.

This means that many of the fundamental assumptions about our world must be reexamined. The key to the future is the supremacy of ideas and their application, a higher order of activity that yields "information." The leaders of tomorrow's world will control information, not assets, territories, or people. Their leadership will be characterized by the empowerment of others.

The law of the microcosm demands that we eschew all forms of materialism. Conservatives in Galileo's day revolted against his discovery, a response rooted in the materialistic notion that the Earth, somehow, must be at the center of God's creation. Many of today's conservatives (especially those, like Allen, who are frightened of "neo-Jeffersonian visions of equality") are making the same error.

Quantum physics in the 20th century has revealed to us that our universe is truly made of things we cannot see, nor ultimately perceive. Final (material) reality, at its most base level, consists of non-observable elements that exist as probabilities. They represent ideas and are, in essence, a form of thought—a mystery that many of the world's greatest minds have grappled with for almost a century.

Gilder informs us that we, too, must grapple with this mystery, because the laws of the microcosm lead us to a higher truth. He is not attempting to prove, as Allen asserts, the existence of God in all of this, but reminding us that since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power



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and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made.

—*Clark Cassell*
*Alexandria, VA*

## On 'Whose Wealth of Whose Nation?'

William Hawkins (January 1990) is right on target when he states, "American society is far more interested in present consumption than future growth." I am not sure, however, that "intervention to curtail imports" (whatever that means) is necessarily the answer. Surely dollar devaluation was a political, not a market, "solution"—and that didn't work out very well. More recently, our legislators have raised taxes on capital gains (read: inflation), a move that hardly makes savings more attractive than consumption. What inflation itself does to savings needs no elaboration here. Tariffs and import quotas merely invite manufacturers to remain fat, dumb, and lazy—at consumer expense.

In short, I have no confidence in politicians' ability to intervene in any useful or constructive manner. Their main talent seems to be for doing the wrong thing at the worst possible time. That being the case, I heartily applaud Hawkins' call for tax cuts to encourage savings and investment. To the extent that such a move would reduce the politicians' power and get them off our backs, it really could help.

—*Charles Chandler*
*Malden, MA*

## On 'Waiting for the End'

I could have died laughing when I saw the words on the cover of the February 1990 issue of *Chronicles*: "WAITING FOR THE END . . . only 3,619 shopping days until the Millennium." I appreciated the humor, and I'm certain the humor was intended to be extended by the reader actually performing the calculation ([10 × 365] − 31) in his mind. However, I, in my compulsivity, could not resist the temptation of taking the mathematics from its humorous simplicity to the full extent of its dismal complexity.

Obviously, your cover was intended to reflect the anxiety of a humanity nearing the close of another Roman millennium; just as occurred at the close of the last millennium (except that *then* the pervasive fear was that the "Millennium" was *ending*). But shouldn't have you added the two leap days from years 1992 and 1996; thus making 3,621 remaining shopping days?

Wait a minute. There is no year "zero" in the Roman accounting of time. Thus, the present millennium ends at the close of 2000, not 1999. So, another 365 days should be added . . . I mean 366. Or is it? Let's see—a leap year is any year evenly divided by 4, except for those years evenly divisible by 100 . . . unless the year is evenly divisible by 400. Yup, it's a leap year. That makes 3,987 shopping days.

Hold on. This is all wrong. The idea of a millennium is not a secular construct (despite the attempts of social science to create the Age of Peace by violence). We should be considering the Holy Crusade, not the pagan Roman calendar directed by Julius Caesar (at the suggestion of the Egyptian scientist Sosigenes) in 45 B.C. In light of the Scriptures regarding the Kingdom of Man during the six millennial days of work being replaced by the Kingdom of God during the millennial day of rest (Gen. 2:2-3, Ex. 20:8-11, Rev. 20:2-4, II Pet. 3:8), and considering Archbishop James Usher's 17th-century fixation of the creation of human life (as part of the re-creation of the Earth's surface after Satan's failed *coup d'etat*, as described in Ezek. 28:13-17, Rev. 12:3-4) at 4004 B.C. (by biblical genealogy and history), we can fix the end of the Kingdom of Man at 1997 (remember no year "zero")! Incidentally, the Usher date may be given weight by the birth of Christ. It is commonly accepted that in A.D. 533, when Dionysius Exiguus related the birth of Christ to the Roman calendar, he should have fixed the date four years earlier; that is, Christ was born in 4 B.C. It is interesting that the number 40 is employed in Scripture many times to represent maturity (Gen. 7:4, Num. 14:34, Matt. 4:2, Acts 7:23), and that Christ was born, to the year, 40 centuries after the Usher date. At any rate, what better day to pick in 1997 than the Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:24, Num. 29:1, John 5:1), which depicts the return of Christ (Is. 18:3-7, Rev. 11:15, Matt. 24:30-31, I Cor. 15:52)? In 1997, Tishri 1 (the date upon which the Feast of Trumpets is celebrated) falls on October 2. So, that leaves 2,801 shopping days 'til Kingdom come.

Of course, Christ said that even though we can know the season of his return (Matt. 24:32-34—this generation can be described as, among other things, having the ability to commit cosmocide; as described in Matt. 24:21-22), we cannot know the exact time (Mark 13:32-37, I Thes. 5:1-3).

Well, we could, at least, remove the weekly and yearly Sabbaths from our number of shopping days.

—*Brian R. Dunaway*
*Missouri City, TX*

## On 'Peace on Earth'

It is not, as Thomas Fleming says in his February Perspective, a "temptation" to "construct the Kingdom of God in the here and now." This is, for Christians, a *command* by our Lord who taught us, in His prayer, that His Kingdom come will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven.

—*John Lofton*
*Laurel, MD*

## Mr. Fleming Replies:

John Lofton's Bible has a different Lord's prayer from mine, which reads "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Textual problems aside, Brother Lofton apparently believes that to pray for the accomplishment of the Lord's will is the same thing as taking personal responsibility for it. On this construction, we should forcibly convert heathens, kill homosexuals, and enforce all Old Testament laws, whether the affected population is Jewish, Christian, or pagan.

*The word "macrocosm" was inadvertently printed as "microcosm" in the last line of Charlotte Low Allen's January review of George Gilder's* Microcosm. *The editors regret the error.*



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MANUEL ANTONIO NORIEga, Panama's crater-faced ex-dictator, may or may not wind up in a gringo calaboose for the rest of his life. After the first blush of the US victory over Gen. Noriega's Panamanian Defense Force began to wear a bit gray, legal authorities in the United States suddenly realized they might not have much of a case against the *caudillo* after all. Nevertheless, the general's trial could set a precedent for the globalization of US law enforcement and ultimately endanger American national sovereignty as well as the rights and security of American citizens against other countries' policemen.

Last summer there surfaced in the nation's press reports word of a secret Justice Department memorandum that argued the case for the legality of US law enforcement agencies fetching home fugitives, even if they've gone to ground on foreign shores. "Fugitives" means not only American criminals who have fled abroad but also foreign nationals who aren't American citizens and who didn't commit their offenses on US territory. Like, for example, a money launderer in Luxembourg who violates US tax and reporting statutes. Or like Gen. Noriega and his colleagues in the multinational corporations that constitute the Latin American drug cartel.

The memorandum remains secret to this day, but Justice Department spokesman David Runkel confirmed to the press that the ruling acknowledges the President's authority to order the FBI to seize fugitives abroad without the consent of the government sheltering the crooks. President Bush denied knowing anything about the memorandum, and Secretary of State James Baker and all the munchkins of Foggy Bottom began to back away from what Justice was proposing.

Mr. Baker said that the Justice proposal "did not take into consideration, as I understand it, international law nor the President's constitutional responsibility to conduct the foreign policy of the United States." In other words, America's cooky-pusher-in-chief doesn't want the legal hounds down at Justice barking at him and his fellow munchkins about how to take care of the world. That's understandable, at least from State's perspective. But the Department's legal adviser Abraham Sofaer had already expressed some more salient objections to Justice's newfound powers.

Testifying in 1985 before a Senate subcommittee, Mr. Sofaer noted that "seizure by US agents of terrorist suspects abroad might constitute a serious breach of the territorial sovereignty of a foreign state and could violate local kidnapping laws." Further, he warned, "How would we feel if some foreign nation . . . came over here and seized some terrorist suspect . . . because we refused . . . to extradite that individual?"

A memorandum of the State Department's Office of Legal Policy, written with regard to the possible seizure of fugitive Robert Vesco (supposedly in Cuba), reached conclusions directly opposed to those of last summer's Justice paper. "US agents," State's memo argued, "have no law enforcement authority in another nation unless it is the product of that nation's consent," and arrests by American lawmen on foreign soil without the government's permission are "regarded as an impermissible invasion of the territorial integrity of another state."

But whatever the legal flaws of the Justice Department position and whatever back-dancing State and the White House may have performed last summer, by December the Justice concept of globe-trotting G-men had become one of the main arguments Mr. Bush was deploying to justify the expedition against Gen. Noriega. The Panama shooting party was not complete until the general was dragged back to the United States like a conquered barbarian king marching in a Roman triumph. So far we don't know whether, like Julius Caesar's foe, Gallic king Vercingetorix, he will be strangled in a cellar when his captors have no more use for him.

But what we can predict, as lawyer Sofaer suggested in 1985, is that once the United States publicly asserts the right to dispatch policemen into foreign countries without the permission of their governments, those countries can just as easily send their own cops here. If American religious groups smuggle Bibles into Cuba, for instance, why can't Mr. Castro send agents into the United States, without permission from Washington or the states, to round up the American culprits who insult the majesty of *Cuba libre*'s own laws? There's no reason, and there's nothing Washington could do to stop them short of physically throwing them out if it can catch them.

About a month before Mr. Bush's muscle-flexing in Panama, liberal Democratic Congressman Don Edwards raised this point to Assistant Attorney General William P. Barr, author of the secret departmental memorandum. "How can we expect other nations to respect our laws if we don't respect theirs?" Mr. Edwards asked. Mr. Barr's rather flaccid response was to say, "I reject any notion of moral equivalency between the United States and outlaw countries." Maybe so, but the point is (a) "outlaw countries" (whatever they are) don't reject such equivalency, and (b) under the Justice Department doctrine, not only pariah states like Cuba but also any foreign government — that of France, Great Britain, Canada, Mexico — has just as much right to play Dick Tracy within our borders as we do within theirs. The legal, diplomatic, and political implications for the safety of law-abiding US citizens, who may or may not feel like obeying foreign laws to which they have never consented, are frightening.

One practical test of the effective sovereignty of a government is its ability to enforce law within its own territory. If the United States claims the power to enforce its laws in other countries' territories, it comes dangerously close to asserting sovereignty over them. The old-fashioned word for that is "imperialism," but today's empires are marching under the label of



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"globalism," whether economic, political, or cultural.

The globalization of law enforcement that the Justice Department has rationalized and that the Bush administration has at least implicitly adopted by putting Gen. Noriega in the dock is simply the most recent instance of the continuing globalist effort to transcend national sovereignty and identity and diminish the very concept of nationality. When nationality and its institutions have been sufficiently worn away, Americans may find that playing global policeman affords them far less security than just minding their own business.

—*Samuel Francis*

PEGGY BUCKEY'S ACQUITtal and the acquittal of her son Raymond Buckey on 52 counts of child molestation brought an end to a highly publicized and exhausting criminal trial. Less noticed, perhaps, were postmortems on the case by jury members, who described the excesses and strange ironies of a governmental crusade "to save our children."

The saga began in August 1983, when the mother of a child at the McMartin Preschool in Manhattan Beach, California, called police claiming that her two-year-old son had been sexually molested by Mr. Buckey. Over the next eight months, prosecutors and allied social workers interviewed 400 children, eventually listing 41 as victims. Children told stories that ranged from watching a rabbit being sacrificed on a church altar to being molested in a car-wash bathroom. The Buckeys were jailed, without bail, in March 1984, and the trial began in April 1987, ending only this January.

The "crusade" atmosphere surrounding the trial reflected mounting public attention to child abuse. This surge in interest began in the early 1960's, when physicians first coined the phrase, "battered child syndrome." Popular magazines such as *Life*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* soon began thumping the drums about "Parents Who Beat Children." In quick succession, all 50 states adopted "reporting laws" that required physicians, teachers, and social workers to report suspected child abuse cases.

In the effort to protect children, these laws also circumscribed a variety of ancient legal protections. They commonly denied physician-patient and husband-wife privileges under the rules of evidence, and gave immunity from civil or criminal liability to those reporting suspected abusers. More ominously, these laws carried a presumption of parental guilt (often involving the seizure of children) until parents could establish their innocence.

Propaganda campaigns by the federal government, state child-protection agencies, and interested professional associations (e.g., National Association of Social Workers) stressed that "all children are at risk." Television docudramas gave particular attention to the crimes of natural parents in traditional families. Reports of abuse mushroomed, climbing to well over one million each year. Some media estimates stated that six million children are abused annually.

Prosecutors quickly discovered that political reputations could be made by jailing suspected child abusers. Therapists found a lucrative new field ($1,000 a day and up) and noted that, under sufficient pressure, children would tell all kinds of stories about their parents. Social workers introduced anatomically correct dolls, to help children break through their inhibitions and "role-play." At other times, children were told that if they revealed the "truth" about their parents, the families might be reunited.

Lost in the self-serving hysteria over the crimes of traditional families were certain truths about child abuse. Honest research showed that stepchildren and the offspring of "female-headed families" were the children truly at risk. Indeed, an article in *The Journal of Ethology and Sociobiology* concluded that "preschoolers living with one natural [parent] and one stepparent were *40 times* more likely to become child abuse cases than were like-aged children living with two natural parents." Another study showed a remarkably high correlation between maternal employment and child homocide.

Also lost was attention to the prevalence of child abuse in the burgeoning daycare industry. "Youth work" has always attracted the pedophiles, and daycare is surely no exception. Indeed, it offers the pedophilic minority up to ten hours a day, five days a week to exercise their charm and control. Even in California, from 200 to 300 daycare centers are regularly under investigation, primarily for allegations of sexual abuse. However, most of these cases have been kept out of the newspapers, because political elites are pressing for a national daycare system.

The exception proving the rule was the McMartin case, where two trendy crusades ("the critical need for more daycare" and "get the child abusers") collided.

In explaining their reasons for acquittal, the jurors who would talk agreed that the crimes had been committed. One said that the children involved had been molested "in some sense, by someone." Another reported: "I believe in my heart" that the children were molested.

However, the jurors also expressed strong criticism of the techniques used by social workers to wring information out of the children. As one explained: "the interviewers asked leading questions in such a manner that we never got the children's stories in their own words." Others complained about the use of anatomically complete dolls, and cited the bizarre tales spun by children unable to separate facts from fantasy.

Predictably, the leading pundits have used the results of the McMartin case to call for the tighter regulation of daycare centers, greater state funding, and new restrictions on the legal rights of the accused (such as child testimony via remote television). As before, the disarray caused by prior state intervention is used to justify more government.

The proper response is to recognize that children are best protected from physical and sexual abuse in intact, traditional homes. If politicians are serious about preventing child abuse, they will do whatever they can to support such homes. Possibilities include substantial tax cuts targeted for families with children and toughened marriage laws that reverse that other legal disaster inherited from the 1960's: no-fault divorce.

Child-protection laws, meanwhile, should be brought back in line with common law precepts: providing precise legal definitions of neglect and abuse; guaranteeing legal representation, rules-of-evidence, and due process in child-removal situations; recog-



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nizing the protective environment of intact homes; and protecting children from abuse by government-paid therapists and social workers.

The state, in truth, always has an interest in disrupting and displacing the family. The "child abuse crisis" merely represents another splendid opportunity for this sort of mischief. If the farce of the McMartin trial can be seen as the logical consequence of statism run amok, some good may yet come from it.

—*Allan Carlson*

THE ABORTION QUESTION seems to have reached an unfortunate standoff. Just as the federal judiciary has seen fit to allow more scope for pro-life legislation, it would appear that public opinion, registered in the election returns (as interpreted), has turned against the pro-life position. If it is true that Americans are more pro-abortion now than they were before *Roe* v. *Wade*, then among other things this indicates how a corrupt government corrupts its people.

I have a modest proposal to help any governor or state legislator out of the ticklish position they are in as a result of having a controversial issue thrown back in their laps. I offer it freely. Were I governor of a sovereign state, I would do what I should have done all along. I would declare that *Roe* v. *Wade* was an illegal, unconstitutional, usurpative, and nonbinding decision. Therefore, the laws of my state in regard to abortion are still in force as written and on the books of 1973. There is no need for new legislation, unless the people, through their representatives, choose.

The only problem with this is that some states—I do not know how many—have doubtless changed their laws since 1973 to conform to *Roe* v. *Wade*. This in itself shows how far we have fallen from any proper conceptions of democracy, constitutional government, and the high and sovereign lawmaking power. States, on this and other questions, tamely pass the laws they are told by unelected authorities to pass, which is not lawmaking at all and not constitutional government, but pretty similar to what happens in the Supreme Soviet.

My own opinion is that the public hesitancy before endorsement of an unequivocal pro-life position does not reflect an approval of or a preference for abortion as a moral position or social policy. What it reflects is a suspicion of government. The "pro-choice" position that no one has any business interfering with a woman's private decision in regard to her body is intellectually and morally nonsense. The community clearly has an interest in life, which is why we have laws against prostitution and murder and why we permit the government to conscript men to die for the country.

But, in my opinion, the people recognize that the state apparatus, especially the federal government, is not the community but is an alien, self-interested force. Therefore, they are quite reasonably suspicious of that authority thrusting itself into the most intimate private affairs. The main problem of our age is the overweening state, an even greater problem than the moral decay represented by "pro-choice."

As outrageous as it will doubtless seem to our global democrats to say so, the American constitutional system was primarily a creation of Protestant Christianity. Neither the liberal minority nor the Catholic minority can govern on this question. The only viable solution to the abortion issue will be a return to tradition. That means, first of all, state rights. Secondly, that means that public policy will generally come down to a position which says: abortion is a moral evil that shall not be allowed except under extraordinary circumstances—rape, incest, to save the life of the mother.

I realize that this position is not morally perfect and will not satisfy my pro-life friends. But I do not know of any law that is morally perfect. The purpose of law is to govern the daily affairs of men in as close an approximation of a moral order as we can manage in a flawed world.

—*Clyde Wilson*

THE DEPT. OF EDUCATION, in its seemingly endless quest to discover new ways for students and teachers to waste their time, has approved a high-school course on the holocaust. Centered around a 400-page textbook called "Facing History and Ourselves," the course is a semester-long exercise in intellectual and psychological nose-picking, an extended submersion into irrationalism and a tool deliberately designed to inculcate guilt in the callow minds of the young.

Written by Margot Stern Strom and William S. Parsons of the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation in Brookline, Massachusetts, the textbook explores both the Nazi destruction of the European Jews and the Turkish massacres of Armenians in World War I. But the textbook, accompanied by outside readings and audio-visual aids, is not just another history lesson. It seems to downplay the acquisition of historical knowledge and understanding and deliberately cultivates both ideological and psychological responses in its students. That it is successful in doing so emerges clearly from comments of students who have had the misfortune to endure the course so far.

Among the things to do and learn in the course are to "discuss why the study of genocide is avoided in classrooms and textbooks." One suggested question the teacher should ask the class is, "How would you respond to parents who want to shield their children from the Holocaust?" One student had this to say about the total onslaught of the course: "This history is grim and it can build up inside and make you feel ugly and hopeless. At times I did."

After watching a film by the late Jacob Bronowski on science and knowledge, another student commented, "I think I understand now. There is


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no certainty. . . . we can't be sure about anything." Another film, about a German soldier who refused to shoot innocent Yugoslavs during the war, elicited this response from a student: "The film asks the question: 'How far should we go in defense of our morals?' I don't know if we can or should go all the way all the time. What good are one's morals if one is dead?"

Given the textbook's approach, it's not surprising that wallowing in the course for several months leads teenage high-school students to start questioning the value of morality and the certainty of knowledge itself. Throughout "Facing History and Ourselves" there is a hammerjack refrain that the holocaust was a logical outcome of Christianity, middle-class morality, and Western civilization.

"It is easier to dwell," the textbook assures the students, "on Denmark as a nation which saved its Jewish citizens than it is to learn about the roles of the Catholic church, the American president, and the collaboration in many occupied nations." In one reading selection, entitled "A Christian Response to Contemporary Antisemitism in Christianity," Tom F. Driver of Union Theological Seminary notes that "a body of liberal Christian educators" refused to go on record against the Rev. Bailey Smith's vapid remark a few years ago that "God does not hear the prayer of a Jew." Apparently you just can't count on Christians to resist hatred and mass murder.

Commenting on the rise of the Nazis, the textbook says that "without strong democratic leadership and the cooperation and support of the major institutions such as the Church, . . . the organized and individual resistance to hate was small and ineffectual. . . . And as the state promoted its racist ideas by allying racism with cleanliness, honesty, family, and hard work, familiar virtues of the church and middle class, the masses chose to follow."

It's understandable that by the end of the course, some students have experienced something akin to spiritual rape. "I feel," commented one, "as though something I have had all my life has been taken away from me, something that can never be totally restored. I almost feel so awful without it, perhaps it's a form of innocence, a removal of my protective blinders. We all in our struggling humanity have to clutch to our eyeballs to keep out the cold light of despair. Looking at things as they really are is a form of growing up."

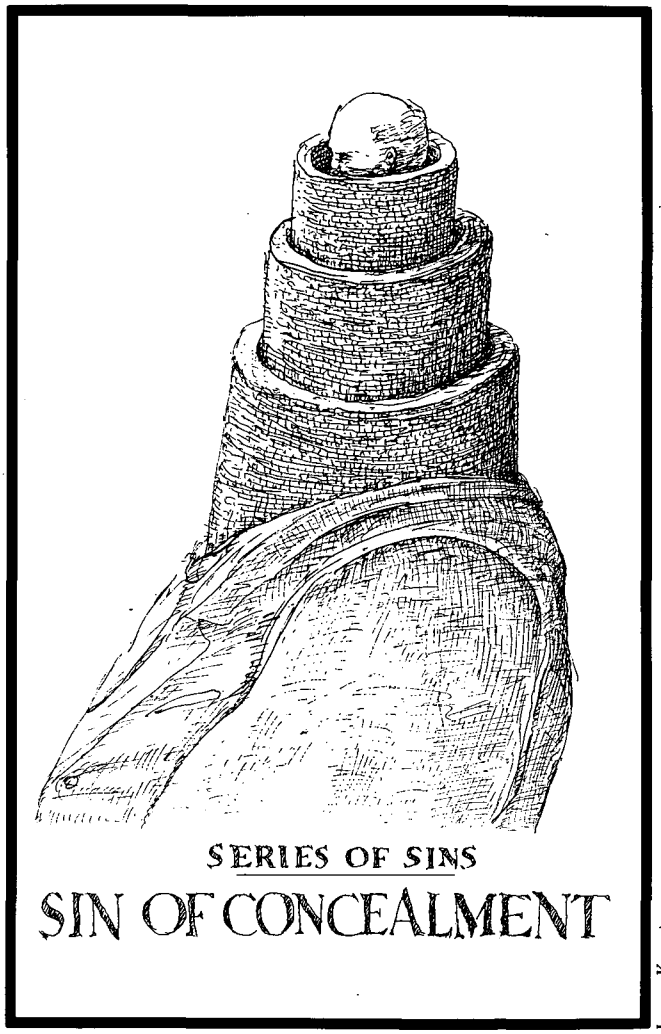
"But awareness is just the beginning!" chirps the textbook, leaping in its final chapter to discuss such contemporary issues as the creationist-evolutionist controversy, the Moral Majority, and nuclear war. Looking at things as they really are is indeed part of growing up, but "Facing History and Ourselves" wraps reality in such a miasma of moral doubt and confusion that the adolescent minds submerged in this course will never catch a clear glimpse of historical truth and moral responsibility.

—*Samuel Francis*

**A FRIEND OF MINE** sat recently on the planning committee for a large regional scholarly organization's annual convention. It is not the kind of convention I attend, because I usually cannot afford it and I found out long ago that nothing of intellectual substance ever happens at such meetings. I prefer small specialized groups where there is a chance of learning something.

The planning committee received a proposal for a paper on "Robert E. Lee's Humor." It was not a profound or significant subject, but was mildly intriguing and presented by a scholar who is of substantial reputation and known to be a good Democrat in his politics.

A black scholar on the committee flew into a rage and delivered a tirade, some of the high points of which were: to have a discussion of General Lee's humor would be equivalent to a discussion of Hitler's humor; the purpose of scholarly organizations is to study his-



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torical and cultural questions in a way that advances the agenda of minority groups, his own especially; he would resign and boycott the organization if the idea were accepted. With only a few dissenters the committee immediately turned down the proposal.

This trivial incident provokes a number of reflections. Whatever happened to the pursuit of truth? to academic freedom? to scholarly courtesy and tolerance? Another reflection: anyone (of any color) who cannot tell the difference between General Lee and Hitler is not fit to teach young people (of any color). Another: what distinction, if any, can be drawn between the angry scholar's position and blackmail, or cultural terrorism?

Unfortunately, this is only a trivial example of a kind of thing that happens every day everywhere in America. We will soon be in the position that our colleagues in Eastern Europe are busily emancipating themselves from. In Communist countries there is an official line that everyone adheres to. It is well understood that nobody really believes the Marxist-Leninist line except a few dull-witted and self-interested party hacks, but everyone must pay obeisance to it. All real discussion is carried on in code (at least until recently), so as not to arouse the ire of the ruling powers. A political or economic analysis of current conditions is presented in the guise of a study of ancient history, for instance, or by the use of double-meaning terminology. We are not very far from that situation now.

—*Clyde Wilson*

# Principalities & Powers

*by Samuel Francis*

It is hardly an accident that the decomposition of the American nation and its culture is paralleled by the decomposition of the American middle class. In the 19th century, nationality and the middle classes were born together as Siamese twins, and their enemies understood their linkage and tried their best to strangle them in their common cradle. They failed, and the twins grew up as inseparable companions. It therefore makes sense that they remain united in death as they were in life.

In American as in European history, the middle class was the creator and carrier of nationalism, so much so that a cliché common among historians and sociologists holds that in the United States the middle class includes everyone. Of course it doesn't, and didn't; but the epoch that historian John Lukacs calls the "Bourgeois Interlude" —from 1895 to 1955—remains even today the normative period of American history, the era that bred the culture and character that most people, Europeans as well as Americans themselves, still think of as typically American, against which we still measure our achievements and failures.

But as Professor Lukacs notes, "middle class" and "bourgeois" are not the same thing. The former refers to a merely economic category that happens to enjoy a material income between that of the poor and that of the wealthy. A middle class is as logically necessary to social existence as the obverse of a coin is to its reverse. But the "existence of the bourgeoisie," writes Professor Lukacs, "has been a particular phenomenon, a historical reality." The principal characteristics of the bourgeoisie were not economic but cultural and psychic—"the sense of personal authenticity and liberty, the desire for privacy, the cult of the family, permanence of residence, the durability of possessions, the sense of security, and the urbanity of the standards of civilized life." These standards derived from or were associated with the bourgeois attribute of "interiority," a preoccupation with the self manifested in literature and the arts through the novel, the portrait, the keeping of diaries, and the publication of letters, and appearing socially and politically in the creeds of individualism and the self-determination of nations.

The dates Professor Lukacs gives for the Bourgeois Interlude identify the era's cultural personality, but the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in culture followed its economic and political triumph in the American Civil War by about thirty years, just as its demise in the mid-1950's followed by about twenty-five years its political and economic overthrow in the Depression and New Deal. In the pre-bourgeois period of American history, during what might be called the "First Republic," neither nationalism nor the bourgeois psyche prevailed, and a decentralized constitutional and social order prevented the consolidation of power by either the bourgeois capitalism of the Northeast or the aristocratic capitalism of Southern plantation masters.

The "Second Republic," the political expression of the Bourgeois Interlude, emerged from the Civil War and made the United States a singular noun and a real nation-state, just like Napoleon III's France or Bismarck's Germany. Bourgeois economic, political, and cultural dominance meant that the new elite no longer had to be content with patching up its own psychic interior. Now it could redecorate the souls of Southerners, Indians, Latin Americans, Filipinos, European dynasts, and anyone else whose spiritual architecture failed to meet bourgeois standards. The technology, industry, urbanization, and mass educational and communications institutions that the new bourgeois elite set up enabled it to start straightening out regional and social bumps in the road of progress within the United States and to make preparations for turning the rest of the world into a bourgeois parking lot.

In the process, the bourgeois elite generated its own destruction. Its corporations, banks, universities and pubescent bureaucracies gave birth to a new class of technocrats who had little use for bourgeois beliefs and institutions. In the economy, the "separation of ownership and control" removed bourgeois property-holders from the direction of their own firms and empowered professional managers in their places. In the state, democratization served to disperse sovereignty among the newly enfranchised and politically active masses, with the result that the "people" received the name of power, but the experts who managed the state held its substance. Culturally, the new intelligentsia that crept out of bourgeois universities and



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into tenured chairs and the editorial offices of newspapers and magazines despised the bourgeois class that had created and subsidized it, and the new savants knit their brows to devise ways to humiliate, subvert, and overthrow the bourgeois order. All that was really necessary to accomplish that goal was for the new elites in the economy, state, and culture to meet, marry, and set up housekeeping, which they did with the blessing of progressivist ideology and an ample dowry from their new federal godfather.

By the end of World War II, the bourgeois class had been effectively decapitated as the dominant minority in the United States, or had been subsumed into the new managerial elite that now prevailed. No fratricidal conflict marked the transition from the "Second Republic" to the managerial imperium because the bourgeois elite, contemplating its interior navel, never fully grasped what was happening and was unable to muster the will or the temperament to resist it. Having insisted on wrecking the "First Republic" and reconstructing it to its tastes, the bourgeois elite lacked the capacity to preserve its own power or the national culture its power had created. In the end, its members lost only their dominance and not their fortunes or their heads, and there is no good reason for most Americans today to lament its passing.

But there is good reason to mourn what will befall those millions of Americans who were never part of the bourgeois elite but who formed their lives around bourgeois culture. As the managerial successors to the bourgeoisie push the United States into a new transnational order and ally with the underclass, the American middle class is being crushed between them and stripped of its cultural identity and heritage.

The end of the bourgeois order in the middle of the century transformed the American middle class from a bourgeois *Mittelstand* to a post-bourgeois proletariat. As political scientist Andrew Hacker describes this "new middle class," it is considerably larger than the old and hence is "unwilling and unable to adhere to rules tailored for a quite different group of individuals in quite different settings." It differs from the old middle class also in its high degree of transiency and mobility, its "national" rather than its local character, and its lack of property. While the new middle class glories in its affluence and ability to consume whatever managerial capitalism sets before it, it conspicuously lacks the material independence of the old middle class and the authority, security, and liberty that independence yields. The members of the new middle class, writes Mr. Hacker, "are employees, and their livelihoods are always contingent on the approval and good will of the individuals and organizations who employ them. . . . Whatever status and prosperity today's middle-class American may have is due to the decision of someone to hire him and utilize his services."

Masticated by the Depression and World War II, and digested by the mass organizations that swallowed the more compact bourgeois institutions, the American middle class has suffered a profound dispossession, regardless of the number of credit cards it carries. Alienated from the nation's past by its size and rootlessness, it retains only a fragmented memory of and identity with the historic national experience. Lacking the autonomy of the bourgeois middle class, it is unable to formulate a new identity that would offer resistance to the emerging transnational elite and its allies in the underclass. "In fact," writes Mr. Hacker, "the new middle class has many attributes in common with the traditional conception of a proletariat."

In the emerging global managerial regime, the middle class may soon be reduced to the other attributes of a proletariat as well. "By any measure," *The Wall Street Journal* reported in 1987, "the share of households with middle-class incomes has steadily declined"; the "once-tightly knit group has broken apart" and its "broad consensus on how to live and what constitutes success . . . has given way to an increasingly fragmented array of life styles and values." The need for wives and mothers to work to sustain middle-class incomes and living standards weakens family bonds. Middle-class home ownership is already obsolescent in many urban areas, and the violence of the underclass, domestic or imported, is abetted by the elite and drives the middle class from the cities their forebears built.

In Detroit, where nearly 10 percent of the population has left since 1980, only two building permits for single family homes were issued in all of 1987, and the Catholic archdiocese announced the closing of 43 churches in the city in 1988. During the Hundred Years War in Europe, wolves roamed the streets of medieval Paris; today ring-necked pheasants strut through the abandoned lots and buildings of Detroit, keeping company with the human wolves who have inherited the city that put America in the driver's seat. In Los Angeles, reports *The New York Times*, "the exodus of white middle-class residents began at least a decade ago . . . but recent alarm over smog, gang violence, traffic and housing costs appears to have accelerated the trend." More than 282,000 Californians moved out of the state entirely in 1988-89. "My 9-year-old daughter comes home from school and says a classmate is dealing drugs," 29-year-old Carol Woolverton told *The San Francisco Examiner* last July. "And there've been so many kidnappings." She is reported to have moved to Oregon with her husband, three children, and two pets. Where will they run next?

Without the cultural cohesion that the bourgeois elite imposed, the new middle class cannot expect to retain for long its traditional identity and values, let alone its political and economic power. But the new proletariat is no longer part of a bourgeois social and political order; it is only an artifact or remnant of it, and it cannot look to the bourgeois elite for leadership or salvation. That elite is extinct, and the national republic it governed during the Bourgeois Interlude is defunct along with it. If the post-bourgeois middle class seriously wishes to avoid its own extinction, it will have to evolve a new group consciousness and a new identity independent of both the moribund bourgeois elite and the techno-bureaucracy of the global managerial order. It will have to expurgate the self-indulgent "interiority" that ultimately proved lethal to the bourgeoisie, and it must aspire to form the core of a new political and cultural order in which it can assert its own hegemony. ◇



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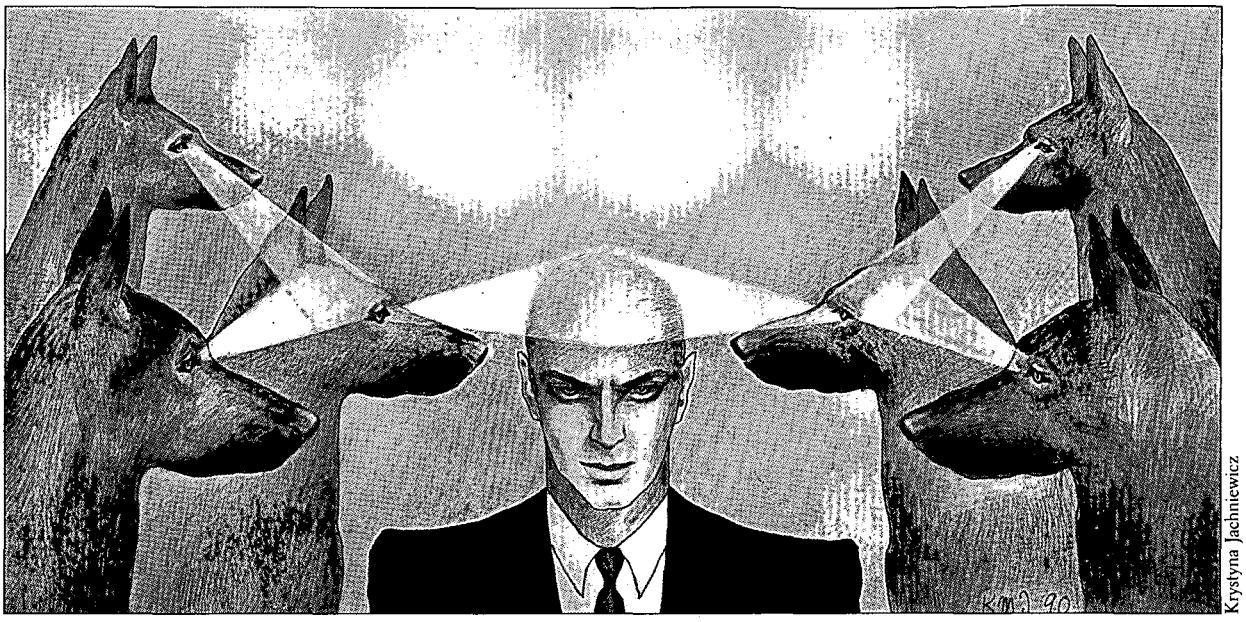

Krystyna Jachniewicz

# Science, Wisdom, and Moral Judgment

by Thomas Fleming

*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*? Juvenal's admonition to husbands has often been applied to government, but rarely with the full force of the original: "Go ahead and lock her up," the Roman satirist warned, "but who will watch the watchmen themselves? She's put on her guard and starts with them." Once a large number of frail mortals has empowered a smaller set to watch over their interests, what—or rather, since institutions always consist of power-seeking individuals, *who*—is going to prevent them from looking after their own, rather than the people's, interest? What is worse, if we are to follow up the metaphor, we are actually facilitating the corruption.

To prevent such corruption in high places, governments are turning to ethics specialists. But what are the qualifications for these positions? Chicago's "ethics chief," Gary M. O'Neill, had been a campaign fund-raiser and personal injury attorney in Louisiana before answering a newspaper ad placed by the Chicago Board of Ethics. Mayor Daley had offended the Board by recommending a candidate with "ties to city hall," and the Board—determined to have its own way—hired O'Neill as executive director on December 12, 1989.

On January 12, 1990, exactly one month later, the new ethics chief resigned, after it was revealed that he had been himself accused of campaign chicanery by the Louisiana Board of Ethics for Elected Officials. The ex-ambulance chaser's apology to the *Chicago Sun-Times* was that it was unfortunate when ambitious bureaucrats have "sad things happen in their lives."

Note the impersonal construction so popular with children and with those who are morally "forever young": as it says on the bumper sticker, s--t happens. Even if the ethics board had not asked about any skeletons in his closet, O'Neill knew it was his obligation to tell them about the problem in Louisiana. He cannot even allege that the whole affair had slipped his mind. He told NPR's *Morning Edition* that he considered candor as an option, but only because he thought his experience with an ethics investigation could be considered an asset.

So now the question is not simply who will watch the watchdogs, but who will watch the watchdogs hired to watch the watchdogs? It is an infinite regression toward a point that represents the extinction of our liberties.

As I write this on the twelfth of January, I believe I can predict at least one of the reactions to this petty scandal. Members of the ethics profession will seize the occasion and mount a campaign to insure that only a trained professional be hired to fill an ethics position. Because, there are now academic courses in medical ethics and legal ethics, and the same business schools that cheered on Ivan Boesky have instituted ethics requirements.

Ethics is a big business, too, for such Watergate alumni as Charles Colson and Jeb Stuart Magruder. Mr. Colson has made himself into something of a celebrity-theologian, but what his credentials are, he has never made plain. Like Chuck Colson, Mr. Magruder has got religion and makes



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his living as a parson. His Watergate experience stands him in good stead in Columbus, Ohio, where the mayor—on the theory "set a thief to catch a thief"—has appointed him chairman of an ethics panel. Columbus has its share of ethical dilemmas, and Magruder's appointment was sparked by a well-publicized local incident: when a million dollars worth of bills fell out of an armored car, Columbus motorists stopped to grab as much of the cash as they could. Mayor Rinehart—himself accused (though not indicted) of sexually molesting a thirteen-year-old girl—thought that what his city needed was the advice of an expert on public misbehavior, and the Rev. Jeb Magruder now spends part of his time raising the ethical consciousness of central Ohio.

Magruder spent only seven months in prison for conspiracy to obstruct justice and is now finishing a book on ethics that combines his religious with his political experience. I thought there were Son of Sam laws to prevent criminals from profiting from their past. The only one of the Watergate team who displayed any moral courage was G. Gordon Liddy, who took orders, kept his mouth shut, and went to jail, while these choirboys sang like birds to the Watergate Committee.

The problem with ethics professionals does not lie in the doubtful character of Gary O'Neill or the checkered career of Charles Colson. Even supposing they had both acquired philosophy and theology degrees from Yale or Chicago, there is no evidence to suggest that moral philosophers and churchmen are possessed of purer morals than pettifoggers and ward heelers. One of the oldest themes of satire is the long-haired ascetic (pagan as well as Christian) who cannot control his appetites; Paul Tillich, by moving his mistress into the house with his wife, was only following a time-honored tradition. But at least the ancients did not appoint some miracle-peddling sophist to advise the Empire on its ethics problems, and until recently ordinary people believed that good behavior was more to be valued than philosophical argument and that a good character was a stronger foundation for personal morality than any number of seminars and advanced degrees.

However, what ordinary people have taken for granted (and Aristotelians attempted to prove) was rejected long ago by most philosophical schools. The program began with Socrates, who seemed to believe that knowing the right and doing it were more or less identical; this mistake, relatively harmless in the hands of Platonists and Aristotelians, was compounded by the Stoics, who tended to confound right conduct with right reason and elevated rationality above the concerns of everyday life. But it was left to the moderns to reduce morality to the exercise of moral reasoning.

John Locke describes "the great principle and foundation of all virtue" as a man's ability "to deny himself of his own desires . . . and purely follow what reason directs as best." Locke was not a fool and realized that a rational, self-denying temperament could not be inculcated by exclusively intellectual means. The formation of character was as much a matter of habit and taste as it was a function of reasoning, but later moralists have not been so cautious, and it is possible to read through all of Rawls and Nozick without ever coming across a passage that acknowledges the nonrational dimensions of moral life.

The rationalist approach to ethics would be harmless enough—like a disease that is always fatal but confined largely to people who brought it on themselves, i.e., academics—were it not for its intrusion into everyday life by way of government schooling. Some conservatives like to think that schoolteachers are all disciples of John Dewey. Those were the good old days. As wretched a philosopher as he was, Dewey had his good points. His own watered-down version of pragmatism, for example, preserved at least some

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of the wholesome and pungent savor of William James. What James, at his best, could give his readers was a sense of flesh-and-blood human beings grappling with moral reality. Today's academic moralism is more likely to deal with such alien and irrelevant topics as whom to throw out of an overloaded lifeboat or what proportion—50 percent, 60 percent, 75 percent?—of our income we should devote to relieving famine in Ethiopia or Bangladesh.

The real culprit in the schools has been Lawrence Kohlberg, who designed (over a period of thirty years) a theory of moral development that begins with an obedient child and culminates in a sage whose every decision is an exercise in universal benevolence and disinterested rationality. To prove his thesis, whose sensible parts are hijacked from Jean Piaget, he borrowed Piaget's method of interviewing children who have been first separated from the families and communities upon which their moral existence depends. Kohlberg did not actually need any evidence for his belief in a steady progression from obedience to an acknowledgment of contract up to the Kantian golden rule which says that our moral actions must be totally disinterested. True morality for Kohlberg means that if I decide to do X, it is not because I or my family and friends will be helped, but because I think that X is always and under all circumstances the right decision. If the world really needs a garbage dump or housing project in my neighborhood, as a moral person I must welcome it, regardless of the danger and unpleasantness it poses to my children and neighbors.

But progress in moral reasoning is not the same as progress in moral living. Kohlberg, like the Freudian Erik Erikson, would have us believe that a moral logician who mistreats his family while serving the world is superior to the moral primitive who takes care of his family, keeps his promises, and risks his life for his country. In other words, Alvin York was wrong to lay aside his universal principle (pacifism) in order to defend his country—as he believed—against the wicked Kaiser. So were the other good men—William Jennings Bryan and Robinson Jeffers, to name only two—who opposed the war and volunteered their services.



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Kohlberg's feminist colleague Carol Gilligan has provided the best refutation of his and Erikson's schemes: it's just like a man, she argues, to make a hero of Gandhi, an abstract universalist who mistreated his wife. Mothers know better, or at least they used to, and women in general never make it to the moral stratosphere. They are stuck down in the muck of everyday loyalties and commitments. Ethics, as practiced by mothers, could never be a growth industry, because their morality is neither an ethical system rooted in logic nor a skill that can be taught. Moral development for women — and for men lucky enough to possess some of their sanity — is a growth in love. Their moral judgment contains more prudence than logic and arrives ultimately at the slow and painstaking distillation of experience that goes by the name of wisdom.

There is a difference between more or less exact sciences — mathematics, logic, chemistry — where the proper application of methods and rules is supposed to produce replicable results, and those branches of learning that study life. Here real science is possible, but it has to take account of organic change, and as Henri Bergson pointed out in *Creative Evolution*, organic life is characterized by growth and change — by what he called "duration" rather than mere time — and that even with all the information, it would not be possible to predict the state of earth's flora and fauna a century from now.

Bergson's argument is even more applicable to human life, where free will and intelligence encourage men to play at being lords of creation. Feed all the "data" on great poetry into a computer, and you will not get a good, much less a great, poem, and even a master poet at the height of his powers can fail miserably, and he will publish his monstrosity, unless he happens to be also a great critic.

Aristotle put the finger on the essential distinction, when he proved that mathematical precision was as out of place in ethical matters (and by ethics he meant to encompass nearly everything having to do with human behavior, including poetry and rhetoric) as rhetorical eloquence was in logical demonstration, and it was Aristotle who firmly situated prudence or wisdom (*phronesis*) rather than rationality as the central technique of moral judgment.

There can be no science of wisdom, because a science requires a set of rules and techniques, which, if properly manipulated, will yield the solution. But ethical dilemmas rarely offer a universal right answer. Is it ever right to take a human life? That, of course, depends on the situation, but it also depends upon the people involved. It may be generally right to shoot a thief running away with the family silver (although there are those who would dispute this), but what if the thief turns out to be my father or brother or a friend who has done me important favors?

Or consider this familiar case: a young man goes to work for a President upon whom the fate of the free world depends. Should he run a clean campaign and risk turning the country over to George McGovern, or should he cinch the election by cheating? Later, after he has been caught, the young man will be asked by the Watergate Committee if he had ever thought about ethics. Yes, Jeb Magruder explained, he had studied ethics with William Sloane Coffin. In the teaching of Mr. Coffin — it might just as well have been Michael Walzer or Robert Nozick — lawfulness takes at best second place, compared with obedience to a higher law, loyalty to principle and party. The same moral reasoning used to justify sit-ins at nuclear power plants also applies to break-ins at the Watergate.

Which takes precedence, loyalty to President and principle or the obligation to obey the law, obligations to family or loyalty to the state? One ancient philosopher posed an interesting dilemma: suppose a young man discovers that his father has found a way of stealing money from the state treasury. Should he turn him in? The answer is no, because the state needs obedient sons more than it needs money.

One may argue with Hecaton's priorities, but most people would not think much of a man who testified against his brother in a Senate hearing on a presidential appointment. These complications of family connection are obvious enough, but in real life the details often add up to more than the general rules. The sublime rationalists celebrated by Rawls and Kohlberg will always turn out to be monsters, if they get the chance. Robespierre and Sherman were both honest men and humanitarians, and Pol Pot had a dream even more sublime than Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King.

## In Memory of Rita Hayworth

*by Richard Moore*

As the Hollywood sex queen almighty
pictured in LIFE in your black lace nightie,
you made us slaver, snigger, chortle.
Of course, we knew that you were mortal —
but Alzheimer's disease!
Jeez.



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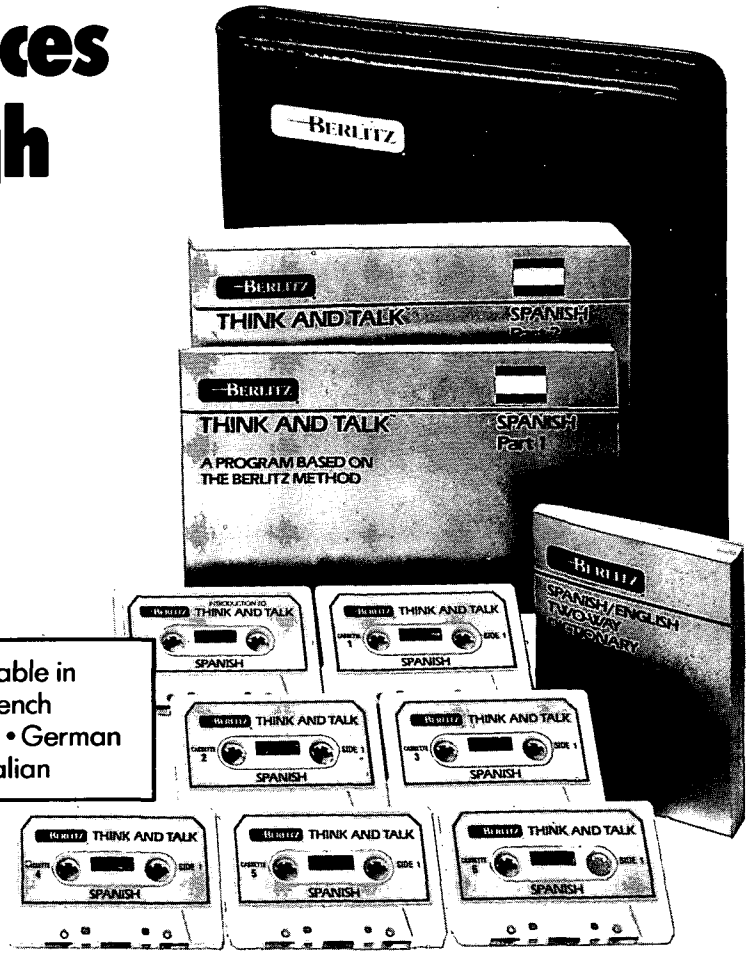


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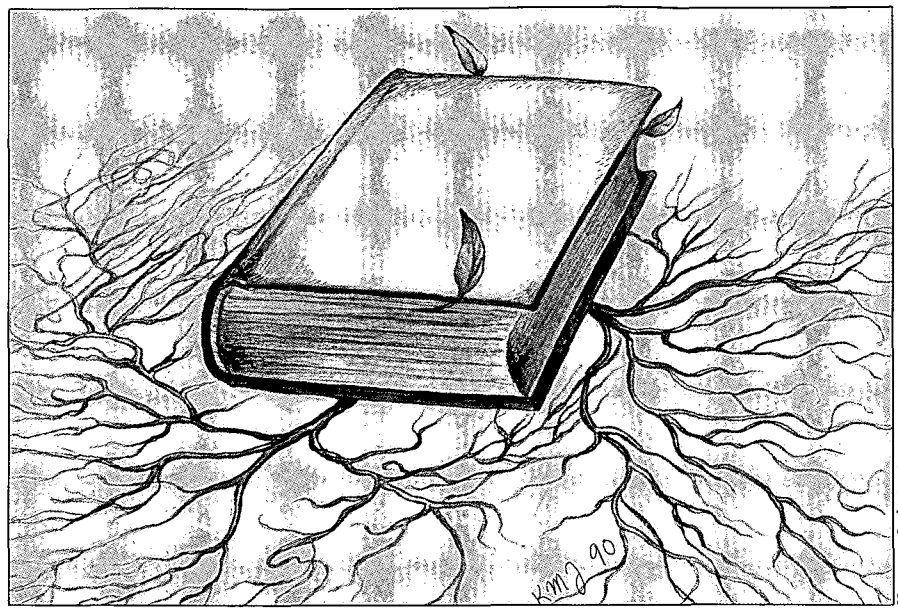


# Deep History

**by Edward O. Wilson**

As I read the announcement and noted with admiration those receiving The Ingersoll Prizes, I can say in all humility that it never entered my head during the past several years that I might someday be so honored, and for that I thank you. I thank you also for the opportunity to make the following brief remarks to an important audience on subjects close to my heart.

Part of the reason for my surprise at being here comes from the continuing division between the two cultures of science and the humanities. We are accustomed to think of scientists in general as experts in narrow domains of physical phenomena who mind their own business when it comes to polity and ethics. Since the 18th century they have become steadily more blinkered in this respect. Little wonder—scientific knowledge doubles every ten to fifteen years, so that journals have grown from a single one in 1665 (*The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*) to over 100,000 today. For their part the intellectuals, the men and women of letters who speak easily of polity and ethics, think of scientists—with some justification—as not competent by reason of training to serve as public philosophers. And they themselves rarely speak of science.

I was awakened to the dangers of this thematic fault line fourteen years ago when I published *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*, which spelled out the biological foundations of social life in animals and went on to suggest that human social life, and even human social institutions, have biological foundations. That part of my book touching on human behavior was attacked savagely by a small group of scientists who identified themselves as Marxists and members of an organization called Science for the People. Until that moment I had no political agenda whatever, unless extending the influence of evolutionary biology can be considered political, and I was taken unawares. But I got interested in the subject of ideology fast, because some New Left groups at Harvard, the last survivors of the 60's as it turned out, were demonstrating against sociobiology and holding what were euphemistically called discussion sessions, the main purpose of which was to discredit the dangerous new idea and—in a few extreme cases—to have me dismissed from Harvard. Within several months I got offers of professorships from four other universities, made with the off-the-record remark that I might find things too hot at my own institution and might like to move to a more congenial environment.

What had I done back in 1975 that was so inflammatory? Human sociobiology, the application of the method of evolutionary reasoning to human social behavior, is now well-established. There are two technical journals specializing in it, and it regularly gets favorable coverage in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Discover*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and other bellwether publications. One international organization, the European Sociobiological Society, is flourishing, and a second, similar organization met for the first time at Northwestern University last August. That mostly American meeting was attained by both social scientists and biologists, was technical in content, and notably devoid of ideological disputes of any kind.

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*Edward O. Wilson is Frank B. Baird Jr. Professor of Science and Curator in Entomology at Harvard. He was the recipient of The Ingersoll Foundation's 1989 Richard M. Weaver Award for Scholarly Letters, for which this was his acceptance speech.*



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But back in the late 1970's, as the ideological battle heated up, it became increasingly clear that what distressed the critics of Science for the People, when you cut through all the verbiage about racism and social justice, was the threat perceived to the core precept of their belief system—namely, that there is no human nature, that human behavior and human social institutions are entirely the product of economic forces and culture; in other words, that human beings can be shaped by imposing an ideal social order. Sociobiology seemed to suggest that reality is the other way around, that ideal institutions must conform to some reasonable extent with the biological realities of human nature.

I'm not sure what it means to win an ideological battle, but the more biological viewpoint now prevails. The critics are mostly silent. Not only is there a large amount of new evidence from genetics, neurobiology, anthropology, and psychology to support human sociobiology, but it is simply a more *interesting* viewpoint to scientists and intellectuals than those of the doctrinaire extreme left. And the failure of Marxist regimes everywhere has tended to discredit the idea of humanity as a *tabula rasa*, the viewpoint favored by the critics. Ironically, even before the Gorbachev era, sociobiology was becoming popular in the Eastern Bloc countries and China, and it's even more favored today.

Yet—and this is the point I want to make with reference to my personal experience—the gap between the cultures remains broad and deep. Few intellectuals and public philosophers have given much thought to the implications of a human nature evolved by natural selection, a biological heritage that may predestine our self-appraisal and ethics, as well as the principal directions of history itself. With some exceptions, most of the voices have been those of scientists, though the evidence is very strong that our common heredity affects our deepest feelings about sexual preference, marriage, childrearing, crime, individual freedom, myth, love of nature, the value of religion, and the intuitive moral judgments that guide the generation of moral law.

On the basis of sound research scientists can now say a lot, for example, about the genetic basis of the avoidance of incest, the genetic basis of the selection of certain symbols and art forms over others, the circumstances under which nuclear families give way to extended families and vice versa, the relation of available resources to sexual behavior, and many other processes of enduring social concern. To the extent that such knowledge takes hold, I suspect that it will confirm some conservative prejudices and some liberal prejudices, in a surprising patchwork fashion. The intellectuals who can bridge the gap and blend science and the humanities in this critical area, in an objective and compelling manner, may well create a new and more powerful set of social principles suited to the new scientific and technological age.

There are two reasons why we're still nowhere near this point in intellectual history. The first is that intellectuals as a whole don't understand the science, and scientists as a whole don't care or don't have the confidence to make the effort to teach them. The second reason is that the area of concern is in fact technically very difficult, so much so that only a handful of scholars are even working on it in a productive manner. Let me put it this way: the central question in the relation of science to the humanities is the exact mechanism of biocultural evolution. This is also to be regarded as the central question of the social sciences. By the exact mechanism of biocultural evolution I mean the detailed manner in which biology and culture affect one another.

We all know that culture is learned, but the evidence now suggests that the learning process is powerfully shaped by past biological evolution. We also know that a great deal (probably most) of biological evolution peculiar to human beings has occurred in the context of culture. The two processes are linked—but how? Most researchers in this field recognize that the key to understanding mechanisms of biocultural evolution must lie in cognitive development, the development through life of mental processes. These processes are shaped by the architecture and functioning of the brain, which are prescribed in turn by the genes. The genes for their part have been put in place by mutations screened by natural selection, that is, differential survival and reproduction, in the theater of culture, played out over many centuries and millennia.

I won't burden you here with details of quantitative models linking these two engines of change together. Suffice it to say that primitive versions exist, but like the experimental hot fusion reactors at Princeton and elsewhere, they aren't good enough yet to start yielding significant net results. When they do, I suspect they will have a profound effect on both science and the humanities.

◆

**We all know that culture is learned, but the evidence now suggests that the learning process is powerfully shaped by past biological evolution.**

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I'll close by coining a phrase: deep history. Deep history is a reconstruction of our past based on an understanding of biocultural evolution. The human heritage doesn't go back just through the conventionally recognized eight thousand years or so of recorded history, but at least to two million years before the present, to the beginnings of the genus *Homo*. Culture is profoundly affected by that earlier genetic progress. Conversely, genetic evolution might easily have occurred even during the past ten thousand years; in theory at least, substantial amounts of evolution affecting mental properties can occur in as few as one thousand years.

Deep history would have no meaning if the human mind were a *tabula rasa*, an all-purpose computer—the view favored by a dwindling number of social theorists. But it is not. To the extent that our biological heritage affects the way our mind works, and hence the way our societies are assembled, deep history makes an enormous difference. Further research will show, I predict, that there is no discontinuity between biological evolution and cultural evolution. There is only biocultural evolution and a rich, wonderful domain between science and the humanities waiting to be explored. ◇



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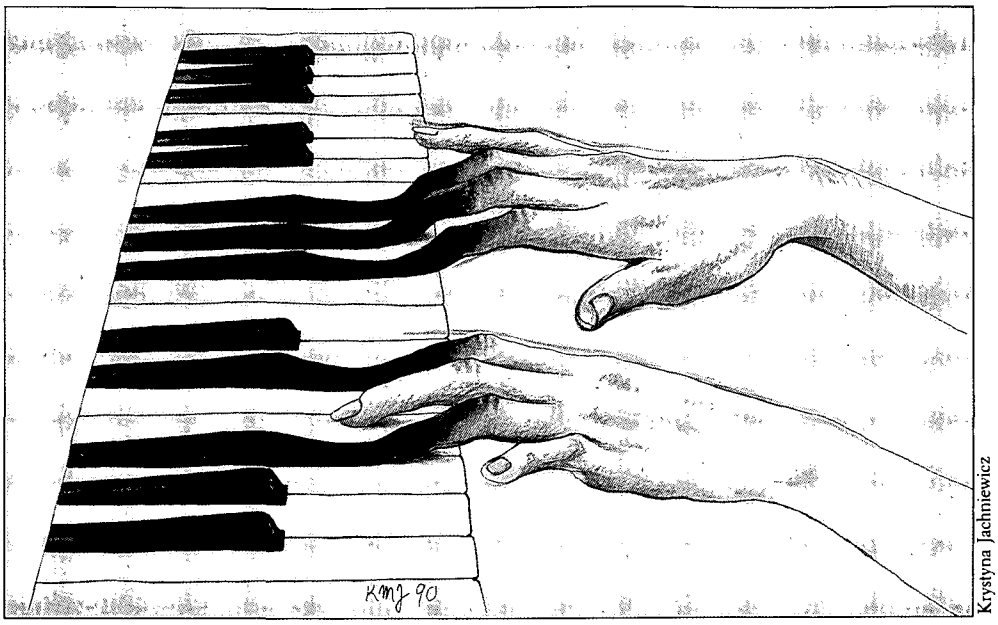
# Inch by Inch

by George Garrett




Krystyna Jachniewicz

A text, or an epigraph, for what I am going to say: some lines from John Ciardi's poem about the Birdman of Alcatraz who was, among other things, a trickster of sorts. These words are from Ciardi's poem "Snickering in Solitary":

> In every life sentence
> some days are better than
> others; even, sometimes,
> better than being free.

And one other, the basic ethical and aesthetic principle I have tried to live by and act on all my life as a writer and find firmly stated in these lines by W.H. Auden, from his poem "The Cave of Making." Which is an elegy for another good poet—Louis MacNeice:

> Even a limerick
> ought to be something a man of
> honor, awaiting death from cancer or a firing squad,
> could read without contempt: (at
> *that* frontier I wouldn't dare speak to anyone
> in either a prophet's bellow
> or a diplomat's whisper).

* * *

In the fall of 1940, a dark and dangerous year for our civilization, General Sir Archibald Wavell, commanding an ill-equipped, ragtag-and-bobtail force, an Army of Anzacs and Indians, South Africans and Scotsmen with, at its core and center, a few impeccably cool battalions of the Brigade of Guards, a force which could still be called, then, without irony or apology, Imperial, attacked a much larger force of what was very likely the best *equipped* army in the world (now that the superbly equipped French, together with their extravagant claims to civilization and culture, had collapsed like a shack in a hurricane). Wavell attacked and drove Mussolini's army out of Egypt and halfway across Libya, taking more prisoners in the process than the total number of all his own forces. Even allowing that it was an Italian army, it was a stunning victory, a brief bright moment in the dark times on either side, before and after.

At the moment of Wavell's triumph, Winston Churchill, prime minister, sent a simple message: "Matthew 7:7." In immediate response to which Wavell signaled to him, with the same cheerful irreverence: "James 1:17."

That is. Churchill to Wavell: "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

Wavell's reply had been, then: "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

I stand here grateful for your good gift and astonished that it has come to me.

And although a shifty and sneaky shadow of myself (who may be real) keeps whispering in my ear the 11th verse of the last chapter of the Book of Job—"Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and them bemoaned him and comforted him over all the evil the Lord had brought upon him; every man also gave him a piece of money and an earring of

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*George Garrett is the author of* Death of the Fox *and* The Succession, *and his new novel,* Entered From the Sun, *is due out from Doubleday this fall. He was the recipient of The Ingersoll Foundation's 1989 T.S. Eliot Award, for which this was his acceptance speech.*



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gold"—that other part of me which I had rather call the real, the true self, is, at this moment, reminded most of the first words of Queen Elizabeth upon being told that her sister Mary was dead and gone and that she, Elizabeth, last of the Tudors, was now Queen of England, Ireland, France, Defender of the Faith, etc. She turned to the Psalms and said, "This is the Lord's doing and marvelous in our sight."

You can see that my mood is mainly celebratory. I am grateful to all of you who are here, grateful to The Ingersoll Foundation and especially grateful to the judges, even as I am admiring and envious of their courage and independence. By which I mean to say, more or less seriously, that had their responsibility fallen on my shoulders I doubt that I would have chosen me for this award. It is not a matter of being deserving or undeserving. None of us, not even among the high and mighty, can ever be called fully deserving. Some, I suppose, are utterly undeserving. But, I must confess that I think and hope I have not lost all sense of the power of humility by saying that I do not feel I am one among them, either. Truth is, as Joyce Cary more eloquently put it in his preface to *The Horse's Mouth*, speaking to the point of whether Gulley Jimson was a "good" or a "bad" artist, neither justice nor injustice has any true place in the arts. The arts, all of them, high and low, crafty and profound, have always to do with creation, The Creation. And secular justice, that concept carried over from the world of stone Caesars with fat lips and broken noses, has nothing to do with the energy and ineffable motion and direction of Creation. Though we are one and all almost endlessly fascinated by the doomed attempt to apply the rules of secular justice, or injustice, to the arts, so much so, indeed, that it sometimes may seem that we think and talk of very little else, we know in our hearts (as we have to; for we live always in Creation) that except for the fool whose heart is softened by every sort of sentimental denial, and the knave whose heart is as hard as a mailed fist, none of us can believe that there is any appropriate application of the ideals or practice of secular justice, of punishments and rewards, to the arts. The Elizabethan image of Fortune's wheel—O long before Vanna White appeared to impersonate the spirit of pure greed!—is a more accurate model. The wheel goes round and we rise and fall, win and lose. As old Job, already mentioned, neatly put it, "The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Put it another way. I am as happy as a kite dancing on a string in an April breeze to receive this award and attention, but I hope and pray I am not foolish enough yet (dotage will follow soon enough) to imagine I earned it. Or that I belong in the company, the visionary company, if you will, of those six others who have been honored here before me. If I may revert for a moment to the snickering Birdman of Alcatraz, I may be allowed to parody some genuinely heroic words:

> Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot
> But he'll remember with advantages
> What feats he did that day. Then shall our names
> Familiar in his mouth as household words,

Borges and Ionesco, Naipaul and Percy, Anthony Powell and Octavio Paz—

> Be in our flowing cups freshly remembered . . .

I toast and salute them one and all, feeling, however, a lot less like Harry and more like Ancient Pistol. Nevertheless he, too, was there with his part in the play to play.

My reasons for a respect, close to awe, for the foundation and the judges are more simple. There is a strong element of discovery here, and discovery seldom, if ever, is characteristic of honors of any kind awarded in the arts. It is a bold gesture, bordering on the outrageous, not to select someone already established as officially honorable. Have you ever noticed how the general officers of the Eastern Bloc nations, as well as many a fierce-looking leader in Latin America and the Third World, and now, too, I am sorry to report, some of the peacetime military leaders of our own nation, are draped, top-heavy, with row after row of ribbons representing more medals and decorations than a body could wear at one time? We know very well that these things do not necessarily represent heroism or betoken valor. We know very well that heroism and valor undeniably exist with and without these tokens. But it is our habit safely to continue to honor those who have already been established as worthy. No harm done, and it is a hard habit to break, especially in this peculiar age where we find ourselves, an age where publicity and notoriety have equal billing with whatsoever things are good and true and beautiful and of good report.

In a world full of much-decorated and high-ranking officers (albeit, in this case, officers of the literary establishment) you have elected to honor an enlisted man from the trenches. I thank you kindly for it. And I accept it, in some part, at least, for all of the others, my brothers and sisters, fellow hard laborers in the vineyard whose work is often not only not as well-known as it ought to be, but also is not noticeably inferior in quality and value to the work of many of their most celebrated contemporaries. There is more democracy in the arts than anyone, and least of all the most honored and celebrated artists, chooses to admit. Even the absence of any strong sense of community feeling does not prevent all our errors and accomplishments from being communal, a communal enterprise. We are, as John Berryman wrote in *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, "on each other's hands who care."

When I go back to the trenches to join the others I shall carry with me more than my own private good feelings and more than the lighthearted joy which comes from the lifting of the spirits, flagging a little if not yet cast in weary lead, of a sixty-year-old man who had long ago tossed away idle hopes the way veteran soldiers used to discard their gas masks on the battlefield (keeping the container because it was waterproof). It will also be my bounden duty to share with my fellows something of your warmth and good will and recognition.

Here I should surely move to a close, on a note of celebration and gratitude, a *Nunc Dimittis*, as sincere if somewhat more modest than Simeon's. But I would be remiss not to say a general word or two about the state of the art (as I view it) at this time.

Plurality and diversity may (or may not) be positive social qualities, or buzzwords anyway, highly valued by the society at large. But in the American literary arts, where there is true diversity and plenty of plurality, the factions are fighting



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each other to the death. Fortunately for one and all the battles are almost exclusively on what Kierkegaard called the *aesthetic* level of reality. They very seldom rise to the next, the ethical level. Because their hearts are turned towards the buried treasure of aesthetics, they are all too often ethically —that is, socially and politically—primitive and as alike as peas in a pod. We need not look to our writers for much political and social wisdom or even the excitement and challenge of individual eccentricity. As for truth, which is, after all, inward and spiritual, we have to be honestly aware (as so many of our writers are not) that we all live together in the selfsame social world, sharing not merely experiences but judgments and follies, as well. As a nation, as a society, our outward and visible problems are not beyond solving. But our inward and spiritual weaknesses, our true faults and flaws then, are more intractable. For instance, we have become accustomed to, inured to, atrocity. Nothing, not the continuing Passover or the Slaughter of the Innocents can raise our eyebrows in shock and surprise. The pain of strangers is meaningless to us. Yet at the same time we are desperately, sentimentally afraid. As I wrote once, long ago, in a poem:

> We have lived too long with fear. We take
> fear for granted like a drunken uncle,
> like a cousin not quite all there
> who's always there.

We are compassionate in the abstract and without much charity. We are sentimental and self-pitying in the particular. And we are not even ashamed of it, because we have lost our capacity for shame. We luxuriate in the bubblebath of private guilts and lack the essential common and communal sense of shame without which there can be no community of secular justice. Even the most brutal Caesars were capable of some shame. Without shame there can be no conscience. Without conscience there can be no true compassion, only the illusory comforts of youth and beauty, of good health while it lasts. No wonder that the words—"and there is no health in us"—were struck from the general confession in *The Book of Common Prayer*. They are too painful and exact to utter even in prayer.

There is one more thing that should be said about the state of the literary arts in the two generations of writers in America since World War II; namely that, like the larger society, having freed themselves more or less from the inhibitions of ethics and religion, many of our most successful and celebrated artists have been busy seeking to manage and to control not merely the present—or, like commonplace totalitarian leaders, revising and reshaping the past to make it suit and fit their present purposes—but also, with what earlier generations would surely and immediately have identified as unmitigated *hubris*, have urgently sought to manipulate and control the unborn future, making it a colony, a captured possession, an extension of the present. That is, they are trying relentlessly to create and write their own history before it happens. That they will fail goes without saying; though precisely how they will fail to administer the unimaginable future, can be taken as an interesting mystery. Equally interesting, here and now, is the cockeyed form of innocence which allows them to imagine that they can possibly succeed.

All aesthetic claims aside, the artist is not charged with any priestly duties. We must work out our own salvation and do so separately and diligently. But the artist can, if he will, spare us somewhat from the heavy yoke of abstraction from Creation. And the artist can also, like others in the active vocations (which is to say the practice of the arts is not essentially contemplative), the artist can offer us the example of his continuing performance, of risking by doing. As an important character in Saint-Exupéry's *Wind, Sand and Stars* says: "What saves a man is to take a step. Then another step. It is always the same step, but you have to take it." Not a great claim, but a huge demand, if you think about it.

I have tried, as one must do in an elegy for an admired artist, to put much of all of this into image and poetry, in a poem in memory of John Ciardi, an old friend I wish (for all kinds of reasons) could be here with us tonight. Here it is:

## DEAR JOHN

Even as, inch by living inch,
I contrive to chip and cut and carve
myself into various and sundry parts—

first, of course, the fingers
and toes, then ears and nose,
these offered, as it were, in words

of *The Book of Common Prayer*, to be
"a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice."
Eyes before sex, arms before legs,

next the thin peeled skin and last
the bloody mess of muscles and meat,
fat and the lonely internal organs.

Must we all be universal donors, John?
Too much to wish for.
Better (and you knew it and said so,
so well, so many times)

to spend skin and bones, to pay
out blood and breath upon
the wholly unimportant poem:

something reasonably simple and simply
(while memory continues) unforgettable,
you and I one time, late on my front porch

in York Harbor, Maine, drinking
*stone fences*—your special favorite,
applejack and apple cider, all

the fumes and essences of Eden;
two old guys, feeling no pain,
beneath the brightly reeling stars

while nearby, shiny and smooth
as a blacksnake, the river is rising up
to high tide, inch by living inch.



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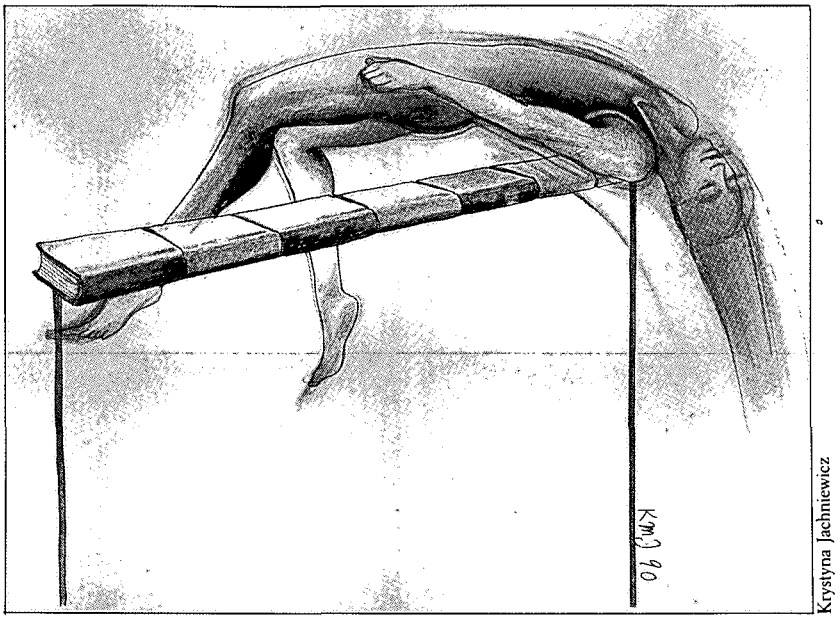
# Angels From the Time to Come

by Frederick Turner




Certain moments in a good story possess a quality that is logically very strange indeed, and that renders them often haunting and unforgettable. Consider Dorothea's choice of Ladislaw as her lover in *Middlemarch*: the logic of fiction would dictate that Dorothea should pair up with Lydgate, who is a heavyweight like her, and if after reading the first half of the book we were to try to predict the outcome, this would probably be our choice. On the other hand, when she upsets our expectations we are on reflection not disappointed but deeply excited by the depth of what has happened: strangely, we now realize that Dorothea's surprising choice was really inevitable all along, that it had to be that way; her originality, her tenderness, her St. Teresa-like sense of mastery could express itself no other way.

We get the same feeling when Edmund has his deathbed repentance in *King Lear*, and even more so when it turns out that his repentance, which would be the perfect *deus ex machina* to save Cordelia's life, ends up with no apparent plot function at all: in fact it makes Cordelia's death even more unexpected, arbitrary, and horrifying. Yet we recognize immediately the absolute rightness of this reversal; it was inevitable all along.

One could cite dozens of other examples: the *Odyssey* is a compendium of them, Faulkner is a master at the art, and so is Tolstoy. In music the same thing happens: Mozart will often pile two or three twists of melodic or harmonic surprise upon each other, and yet in retrospect the structure of his piece will hold firm, perfectly braced; airy, yet as strong as adamant.

The peculiar thing about such moments is that by their unpredictability before the event combined with their retrodictability after it they radically defy the requirement that truth be independent of time; and yet they are by no means arbitrary or merely expedient — it is not as if the artist were irresponsibly flinging in extraneous incident or distorting the integrity of the work by arbitrary crowd-pleasing interventions. It was Plato who most clearly established the idea that truth cannot trim its sails with the winds of time, that two and two must equal four for all eternity, not just today, or on Wednesdays, or in the past but not the future. Certainly there are kinds of coherent truth for which Plato's requirement of temporal indifference must hold. But he is perhaps wrong in implying that coherence and intelligibility — which are supreme virtues, else we could not even reason about such matters, and must come to blows — are only possible under conditions of time invariance. Edmund and Dorothea and Odysseus and Quentin Compson and Anna Karenina are coherent and intelligible — so much so that a lifetime is not enough to appreciate how much. But much of what they do has the peculiar capacity to alter the past in such a way as to make certain futures inevitable, when they were not so before.

We need, then, a new logic to talk about such actions, one that always has two senses — a strong sense, which applies retroactively, and a weak sense, which applies prospectively. Recent developments in Italian philosophy have produced the expression "weak thought," which though it properly applies to the level of assertion and probability in a proposition, can be used here as well. Researchers in cognitive science, the philosophy of mathematics, and artificial intelligence have all come to recognize that the work of the human mind cannot be modeled without some kind of soft linkage between concepts that relies on large vague databases, partial resemblances, and relative probabilities of truth. But what we want are laminat-

*Frederick Turner is Founders Professor of Arts and Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas and author, most recently, of the epic poem* Genesis.



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ed words, whose one face is weak and whose other is strong, and a reasonably rule-governed way of using them.

In the Oriental martial arts there is a fine practical vocabulary of concepts for dealing with such matters. A karate expert will view his opponent with "soft eyes," meaning that the attention is global rather than concentrated, and will achieve by this a decisive edge in speed over the opponent. But the martial arts vocabulary does not easily lend itself to philosophical speculation; and this essay is a kind of game or fiction in speculative philosophy. We can find in contemporary theoretical physics perhaps a more exactly defined set of terms: specifically, in John Archibald Wheeler's notion of the strong and weak anthropic principles. What this essay will do is explore some of the implications of the anthropic principle(s) for a subject that, we will see, is in its essence bound up with time asymmetry: the nature of angels.

A simple experiment will illustrate one of the most mysterious phenomena in quantum mechanics. Take two polaroid sunglass lenses and hold them against the light, one behind the other. If they are aligned so that their axes of polarization are parallel with each other, the two lenses together will let almost as much light through as one lens alone. But if you rotate one lens so that the axes of polarization are at an angle, the amount of light getting through will diminish until, when the lenses are at 90° to each other, no light gets through at all. A sunglass lens cannot bend the polarization of the light; all it can do is stop light that is vibrating in a north-south direction, say, and let light through that is vibrating in an east-west direction. Thus it makes perfect sense that the two lenses should together stop all the light, since all the directions in which light could vibrate involve some combination of north-south and east-west.

The mystery appears if we place a third lens at about 45° between the two lenses that have already been set at 90° to each other. Common sense would suggest that to do so would be a little superfluous, because all the light has already been stopped, and total darkness cannot be further darkened. What actually happens, though, is this: *light now starts passing through the three lenses, when it could not pass through two!*

What does this mean? Quantum physics offers various explanations, all of which involve some deep and beautiful violation of common sense. One goes like this: a wave (or particle) of light before it reaches the lenses does not "know" what its polarization is, and the first lens forces the light to "make up its mind." However, it only has to make up its mind about one of the axes of polarization, not any others. If the second lens it hits absolutely excludes what the first lens absolutely permitted (90°) then all light is stopped. This is proved by the fact that if the 45° lens is placed on either side of the pair of opposite lenses, and not between them, it cannot alleviate the darkness, because the unmediated contradiction still exists. But if the middle lens is at 45° to the others the light gets to make up its mind again, and by the time it reaches the third lens it has "forgotten" about the "decision" it was forced to make at the first lens; the light coming through the second lens is just light that has been through a northeast-southwest filter, and that is all it is. The third lens does not absolutely contradict the second, and thus about ¼ of the original light gets through.

But something very peculiar has happened to the nature of time in this account. Events and objects are constituted by the information that they exchange with other events and objects and with themselves; and the means by which that information gets exchanged are, as forms of light, subject to quantum uncertainty. Which means that when the light that tells us of events in the filament of a light bulb, or on the surface of the sun, is forced to declare the orientation of its vibration, then the nature of the light bulb and of the sun becomes *retroactively* a little more definite. Reality is, when unobserved, only approximate in its nature: it is a probability function or "wave function" specifying a number of possible states which it might assume if challenged, at which time the packet of uncertainty that constitutes a particle before it is measured is "collapsed"—forced retroactively to make up its mind. Why "retroactively"? Because light, and any other form of information, is limited in the speed of its propagation, and anything we observe is already in the past of the observing age.

Reality, then, depends partly on how we measure it. The two-lens system asks a different question of the world than the three-lens system, and thus the answer we get is different, and thus the reality of which we asked the question, and which is already in the past, must be different. Events do not occur in and of themselves, but exist in a kind of partnership with their observers. The "mighty world of eye and ear," as Wordsworth puts it, is made up of "what we half perceive, and half create."

Now this idea can be, and has often been, misinterpreted by those who through wishful thinking, or malicious mischief against the noble and simple authority of science, or a preference for the moral excitement of their own opinion over what is demonstrable, desire to discredit the possibility of reasonably sure knowledge. Hence the conclusion that some critics have drawn from a superficial study of quantum theory, that nature is incoherent, and dependent upon the ideological views of scientists, which in turn reflect the political system and its entrenched power and privilege, etc. And thus such abominations as "Jewish science" in the 30's and "feminist science" now. The fallacy lies in the fact that the "observing" and "measuring" that collapses the wave function can be performed by other entities than human beings. A rock can collapse a photon's wave function, too, and the universe had a definite being, though a simpler and cruder one, before human beings evolved. Thus the universe has been continually and cumulatively "making up its mind" through a consensus of exchange of information for 15 billion years. We are now an increasingly important part of that consensus, but as Lysenko learned when his Communist wheat died in Siberia, politics cannot resist a sufficiently negative vote by the inanimate public of the universe. By the time we observe most things that are larger than subatomic particles, they are already part of a healthy, functioning, mutually-supporting reality system, to be altered only if we know the fault lines of its construction and have the technology to pry them apart.

Let us revise our earlier formula about the partnership of events and their observers, and say that events and objects at



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least need to be registered as such by some other event or object that has the selective sensitivity to do so. Many events and objects can be registered by very crude "observers," that need only be made of matter to do their job. Others, though—and here things get interesting—do need rather sophisticated observers; and there are many whose more complex aspects only come into existence at the call of such sophistication and sensitivity. Or let us put it this way—the observer is enfolded, in whatever way the observer is capable, in the being of the prior event that is observed. If the observer is crude, its report will form part of the brute consensus of matter; but if the observer is very sensitive, new properties will appear, and will really begin retroactively to exist, within the past event that is observed. Organized forms of matter are more sensitive, have finer resonances, than amorphous ones; living things, animals and plants and so on, are more sensitive than stones; and we are more sensitive than animals and plants, if only because our sensitivity includes theirs (and if it did not, we could not even argue about their relative merits).

It was Wheeler's idea to apply this reasoning to the most important quantum event of all: the origin of the universe. In what sense was the origin of the universe a "quantum event"? The Big Bang theory, which best satisfies the evidence, requires that before it was $1/10^{20}$ second old the whole of the universe must have been packed into a space less than $1/10^{10}$ centimeters in radius, and this was all the space there was. It is precisely this realm of space and time within which quantum theory holds, and within which the role of the observer becomes important. We human beings are certainly the most obvious and sensitive observers of the origin—for instance, we are still picking up the background radiation of the Big Bang from all directions, a form of information about it that is direct and unmediated, if very old.

One of the greatest challenges to the cosmotologist is why the universe originated with the precise numerical constants that it did. These constants include the inverse square law by which the force of gravitation diminishes with distance, the speed of light, the electron volt constant, Planck's constant, and so on. If these constants had been different in the slightest degree, no conceivable form of life could have evolved; indeed it is hard to see how even organized matter could have evolved. Why should we have had the astonishing luck to have got the exact origin that would bring about a universe which in the fullness of time would deliver us into existence?

Wheeler's anthropic principle answers this riddle elegantly by suggesting that of all the possible origin-states for the universe, only one would bring about observers of it that could collapse its wave-function, ask it the question that would force it to declare a particular identity. Thus the universe originated as it did, with that particular set of constants, because it was since seen to do so. Any other hypothetical universe would remain only an eternal possibility. We, its observers, necessitated an observer-producing origin; and our question about it, like Parsifal's, though long delayed, transforms the Waste Land of the original uncertainty into the rich and productive field of cosmic evolution.

However, this formulation of the idea is still a rather coarse one. There is, as we have already noted, a wide range of organisms between photons and human beings, of varying degrees of organization and complexity; from atoms, which are sensitive to electromagnetic and gravitational information, through crystals, which are also sensitive to vibration, heat, and so on, to animals, which can smell, see, and hear. All of these can act as observers and ask, in their own way, the fructifying question of Parsifal. Thus it would be more accurate to say that as more and more sensitive observers evolved, they respecified more and more exactly what the initial state of the universe must have been.

A later, more evolved and sophisticated organism collapses the wave function not only of the Big Bang but also of all prior organisms; either indirectly, through the Big Bang itself, or directly, because of its implicit observation of quantum events within those simpler, earlier beings. Thus the chordates had to be as they were to bring about vertebrate observers; vertebrates must be just so to occasion mammalian observers, mammals to bring about primates, and primates to be the ancestors of human beings. The fruit of any process is also an observer of it and thus a partial determiner of its nature.

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**We can know the infinitely interesting miracle of being, but are most of the time somehow divided as by a curtain from the actuality of it as experience.**

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Wheeler's anthropic principle, thus generalized, now seems to fit nicely our requirement for an intelligible account of time asymmetry. As we look forward toward a putative event we need assume no more than the weak anthropic principle: whatever that event, it will syllogistically bring about a plausible future observer of it (or else there would be no evidence that it had happened). As we look backwards we can assume the strong anthropic principle: that earlier event was partly necessitated by the requirement that it help produce a universe in which we can look back at it. And the weak and strong principles are not isolated from each other, but share a strange seam across their backsides, so to speak, and form a kind of Janus, a sort of transitional January between the old year and the new. Through that semipermeable seam there is a leakage or tunneling of implication or entailment, just as the present moment conducts and mixes the different logical environments of past and future into each other.

How strange this reasoning is! Indeed, before its logic unfolded, it would have been utterly implausible to the mind that now thinks it; and yet as each idea precipitates into being, it opens up a new landscape in whose context a new plausibility emerges. There must be something in it, so the mind reflects, for the process itself is so like the very story of real life!

For a new implication has just come over the horizon: our own nature and activity, as well as being partly determined by past causes, and partly the result of the autonomous



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self-organizing iterative feedback of our own consciousness, must also be subtly guided and conditioned by future observers. Our own wave function is being collapsed by future awarenesses that we will help to bring into being and that will in turn ratify our existence and help us to fall into a definitive shape.

I know perfectly well that my own mind is not capable in itself of those leaps or marvelous compactions into a new thought that it undergoes in the process of composing a poem or a creative essay. Perhaps this feeling itself, of there being some niche or prepared receptor for the heavy current of thought, some attractor that will emerge out of its turbulence, was what the Greeks meant by the Muse. Sometimes she speaks with unmistakable and imperious tongue (yet she is so delicate, so easily deniable, is she not?), sometimes in a still, small voice; but if one had never experienced her, and suddenly heard her voice for the first time, one would be convinced that one were in the presence of the supernatural, or that one were hallucinating thoughts not of one's own making. Only when she is, as she is, a daily source of insight and surprised reminder, do we take her voice as normal and unremarkable. But without it how dull and dim the world would be!

All cultures know of them, these spirits or kamis or "presences / That piety, passion or affection knows," as Yeats put it, these beautiful and terrible animate forms that visited Lot and Abraham and Jacob and Ezekiel. The report of them is so widespread that they must represent some reality. Let us name these future knowers of us, these observer-participants in the creation and generation of our nature and being. They are the angels.

But as the argument implies, they are not only the attractors and subtle guides of our action, our creative evolution. They are also its result. Angels are painted as babies, as *putti*; of course, because they are our children, our unborn descendants. Children, but evidently children winged with incalculable power and complexity of purpose; as far beyond us as we are beyond the dim wonderings of pithecanthropus; as they were beyond the animals, plants, minerals, and physical particles that preceded them—those forerunners that, by observing, we lend a more distinct being:

*Frühe Geglückte, ihr Verwöhnten der Schöpfund,*
*Höhenzüge, morgenrötliche Grate*
*aller Erschaffung,—Pollen der blühenden Gottheit,*
*Gelenke des Lichtes, Gänge, Treppen, Throne,*
*Räume aus Wesen, Schilde aus Wonne, Tumulte*
*stürmisch entzückten Gefühls und plötzlich,*
*einzeln,*
*Spiegel: die die entströmte eigene Schönheit*
*wiederschöpfen zurück in das eigene Antlitz.*

Early successes, favorites of fond Creation,
ranges, summits, dawn-red ridges
of all forthbringing,—pollen of blossoming
godhead,
junctures of light, corridors, stairways, thrones,
chambers of essence, shields of felicity, tumults
of stormily-rapturous feeling, and suddenly,
separate,
mirrors, drawing up again their own
outstreamed beauty into their own faces.

—Rilke on angels, repeating much that we know from Ezekiel and Blake and Giotto, and more strangely the ritual art of Indonesia and China and Tibet, the dragon-forms of Mayan vision-carvings, of African and Eskimo spirit-masks; the authentic voice of the shaman.

If the angels are our children, what must we do to bring them into being?—for clearly they are so beautiful that we ought to bring them into being. Having once experienced them, one can be in no doubt of the value of one's existence, could one have but the smallest role in opening to them the gates of history.

We are at a remarkable juncture in our own history and indeed of the history of the cosmos: when evolution becomes fully self-aware, when nature finds the theme and mode it has sought from the beginning. Not that the change that is coming will be utterly unprecedented. We have always been capable of directing our own evolution: in the traditional way, by choosing mates who have the beauty and wit and capacity for love and strength of mind that will lead the species by increments toward the more deeply human; and we know the more deeply human as horse breeders know racing temperament and apple breeders know a noble strain, even before we have good examples of what we are after. In like fashion a poet recognizes the line or cadence or image as truly part of the unborn poem. But now that process has become irretrievably self-conscious, and is assisted by a more and more powerful battery of technical aids.

However shocking and terrifying is the idea of biological engineering, we cannot now lay it aside. If we want angels, should we not build and beget them? Genes can be altered, added, removed; and, more excitingly, new studies show that we use only a tiny fraction of our DNA, and that our development and mature being depends almost as much on a unique pattern of suppression and expression of the genes we already have, as on what the genes are to begin with. This pattern itself may be subject to craft and sculpture. Especially in this area, now known as epigenetics, and encompassing the older, more empirical sciences of embryology and development, some of the ancient enemies of humankind—cancer, aging, immune deficiencies, neurochemical diseases—now seem to be revealing their weaknesses.

Slowly, infinitely carefully, in fear and trembling, we will continue what we have already started: the correction of inherited diseases, the repair of genetic deficits, the tuning of the chemistry of mood, memory, and thought so as to express fully, rather than in its present muffled and crippled form, the special grandeur of each individual's inheritance. Those who are great artists, athletes, givers, scientists, lovers, know the sweet clarity and power of perfect work and action, in moments that are tragically brief but which nevertheless make a lifetime worthwhile. But they also know the stifling burden of their own usual stupidity, forgetfulness, depression, irritated spite and sheer incapacity: as when you look at a certain kind of problem in a field for which you have no talent, and nothing happens, the quick insight does not flow.



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Why should not the whole human race be given the capacity to experience and use that intensely individual genius that we reverence in just a few? Let us not comfort ourselves in our present condition by false and vulgar prejudices: that genius is necessarily unhappy, that geniuses are all the same, that the greatly talented are necessarily unstable or lopsided in personality, that they lack the common touch, that they are impractical. These problems all people have, and if anything great genius is often remarkably free of them. The unhappiness of genius is less due to inherent flaws in the nature of genius itself than to the fact that having learned to fly, the genius feels more exasperatingly the crippling handicaps that all human beings labor under; and to the "inhuman dearth of noble natures" about them, as Keats put it. Perhaps through biotechnical means we may be able eventually to free the choked genius of our species: and having done this we would already be on the way to angelic intelligence and love. Of course a caution is in order: the biotechnical tools will themselves take artistic genius of a high order to wield without oversimplifying the problems or their solutions; and to this point we must return.

But our future evolution may well proceed in a fashion that partially transcends the strictly biological altogether. Gradually we are learning to approximate the capacities of the human mind by means of cybernetic artificial intelligence. Can there be any doubt that an understanding of the working of Mind will follow our understanding of the working of life, and that just as we are now able to synthesize living matter, so we will be able to synthesize self-conscious thought and feeling and imagination? One day that evil distinction between the artificial and the natural will be thrown down, and we will have escaped the mind-forged manacles that alienate us from the creative and self-reflective evolution of the rest of nature. On that day we will have extended our minds and spirit into dimension beyond dimension; we will have a direct neural-cybernetic interface with our thinking machines, and through them to all of nature; we will feel as stones and flames and petals feel, because the instruments by which we register their experience will be directly connected to our nervous systems. All nature will be our home and our body.

And of course it always was, as the Zen sages tell us. But it is a peculiar thing about us, that we can at best feel only briefly and distantly the things that we know ought to make this world, even at the worst of times, a very paradise in every moment. We can know the infinitely interesting miracle of being, but are most of the time somehow divided as by a curtain from the actuality of it as experience. Why should not nature simply be waiting for us, with our great natural technical intelligence, to simply plug ourselves in to the universe—to complete a new loop of feedback in the world? Perhaps our unhappiness, our frustrated rage, our cruel despair, come from the unconscious realization that though it is what we were built for, we haven't got around to it yet. Nature cannot do it by herself, and thus evolved us, a special quintessence of the soul of nature, her "dearest-selved spark," as Hopkins says, to do it for her. Perhaps the happiness of scientists and artists and saints is that they come closest to this in-feeling and participation, though by means that are only traditional and are as yet truncated of the new sensorium that needs to be added.

But the traditional means are indeed pretty wonderful in themselves. Indeed, it will be a part of the new science to recognize just how subtle and marvelous they are. The arts are already an empirical craft of artificial intelligence, a means of creating programs in paint, sound, stone, action, or words that embody their makers' angelic insight yet survive their makers to be reincarnated when booted into the brain circuitry of other people. The traditional arts are also a way of getting access to the enormous integrating powers, the tact and instinct of nature at her best, that lie dormant in the human brain. Thus they are an essential partner with the new science and technology, in creating and begetting those future beings that we see in our visions of angels. By itself the new technique would be shallow, a technical fix with possibly disastrous consequences: monsters or chilly abortions. Only when the sensibility of a Mozart, a Shakespeare, a Velázquez, a Murasaki, a Louis Armstrong is added to that of a Von Neumann or a Francis Crick, will the miracle have a chance of happening. And the artists themselves are special partly because they in turn have more immediate access to the angels they are helping to bring to birth. We can perhaps agree that if this work is not impossible, it might be a project as worthy as the building of the cathedrals and the construction of Classical Greek civilization—something to replace the anomie of our century with a commitment that the whole world can share.

**Events do not occur in and of themselves, but exist in a kind of partnership with their observers. The "mighty world of eye and ear," as Wordsworth put it, is made up of "what we half perceive, and half create."**

There is a curious circularity in the last paragraph that will bring us to the last point in this odd exploratory essay. Let us digress for a moment. Recently brain science has been revolutionized by the new concept of "top-down" causality (Roger Sperry's term). Brain science still concedes that the components of the brain—its atoms, molecules, cells, and anatomy—indeed partially determine, in a "bottom-up" fashion, what happens on the holistic level of thoughts, decisions, feelings. But it is becoming increasingly clear that there exists a very powerful top-down causality, wherein we can change the chemistry and electrical activity of our brains by means of our choices, actions, knowledge, acquired habits, creative efforts, and willed attitudes; the whole governing the parts.

But if the lower hierarchical levels of the brain are both causing and being caused by the higher levels, then the brain's activity is an essentially circular—or, better, a spiral or helical—process. It is a feedback system determining itself and determining its own process of self-determining. Now if the brain is an elegant microcosm of the universe—



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and it would be hard to see how we could have survived as a species if it were not, for otherwise it would always be wrong about the world and thus have led us into extinction—then the universe itself must be such a part-whole, top-down/bottom-up feedback system, too.

But it is also clear that the wholeness of the universe is an emergent property. As more and more sensitive organisms evolve to observe it, escaping the relative solipsism of the subatomic and atomic levels of being, so the universe assumes more and more a coherent unity. On a starry night we can see, in a sketchy and synoptic way, nearly half of it: but it takes specially and recently evolved eyes and brains to do so. If the holistic level of the universe is still only emerging, then we must identify the past with part-to-whole, bottom-up causality; and the future with whole-to-part, top-down causality. That is, if the universe is something like a brain, the brain-parts of the universe are its past, and its mind is its future. We might even *define* the past and future, and thus time itself, by means of such a distinction.

But if the process of determining, of causality, goes both ways in time—bottom-up in the futurewards direction, top-down in the pastwards direction—then the universe itself is just such an iterative, spiral feedback system as is the brain. It is not just a linear process, and we must abandon all merely linear models of time. As a nonlinear system the universe is one of a class of systems now being investigated by chaos theory, fractal mathematics, and the theory of nonlinear, dissipative, self-organizing dynamical processes. Every event and object in the world has in a sense been round and round the great circuit of material and final cause an infinite number of times: its origins determining its present state, its results determining its origins. Thus every event in the world is infinitely rich; there is indeed infinity in a grain of sand, eternity in a flower. And this infinity, this eternity is not the vacuous and otiose thing that we find in classical metaphysics and set theory, but an active, open-ended, transformative infinity, a generativeness, like Chomskyan grammar. Every experience we have, if we were to see it properly, is infinitely deep, fully involving the creative and voluntary energy of the universe as a whole.

Here, of course, we are on the frontiers of theology: and before that prospect, the speculative tongue turns almost to stone. But there is one step between us and that blinding light, one further mediation or ratio of speculative understanding: the angels. And even if they do not exist, is not the very thought of them an active warrant of their reality as causes? For are not thoughts causes?

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## The Cycles of Things

*by Richard Moore*

The bulldozers have grunted through the spring,
and now, where marsh had long troubled the golfers,
there is a smooth and almond-shaped lagoon,
where through the years thousands of golfballs will
collect, and where flat stones skip splendidly.

But will our playful pleasures ever equal
the fun of making it—from the first vague
design, to the harsh roar of the mud moved,
and for the final smoothing, soft and green,
Italian gardeners full of subtleties?

Still that's how the world goes. First the adept
work that is joy; then the ineptitude
of games grown meaningless, the aimless work,
as huffing duffer golfers and bored poets
fill the lagoons and recreate the marsh.



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# Rouge on a Corpse's Lips

by Samuel Francis

*"The history of the world is the judge of the world."*
—Hermann Ullmann

**Ghosts on the Roof: Selected Journalism of Whittaker Chambers, 1931-1959**
*Edited by Terry Teachout*
*Chicago and Washington: Regnery Gateway; 361 pp., $24.95*

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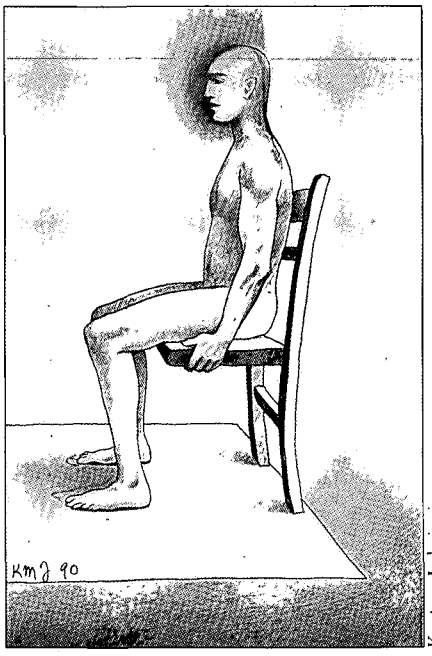
Two ironies attend the life and career of Whittaker Chambers. The first is that the one-time Communist spy, foreign editor of *Time*, and witness against Soviet espionage became notable during his life and afterwards only because of the Hiss Case, which brought him such notoriety that his career as a professional journalist came to a quick end. The second is that his legacy as a thinker and writer to a world he believed was dying issued from the Hiss Case itself and from what he had to tell that world about the meaning of the case. Unable to continue the profession he followed after leaving the Soviet underground, Chambers evolved into a prophetic figure, an almost Dostoyevskian character, whose brooding vision of a decadent West engaged in a desperate death struggle with communism and with its own poisons has haunted those few Westerners who have perceived the unfulfilled greatness of the man.

Terry Teachout's collection of Chambers's miscellaneous writings, from the Marxist fiction of his early days to his last mordant syllables in *National Review*, is in part intended to correct the view we have had of Chambers as either (on the left) a "messianic anticommunist" or (to much of the right) a bottomless pit of often lachrymose horror stories about the god that failed and its worshipers. It is no fault of Mr. Teachout's that his anthology does not entirely succeed in this effort. What Chambers wrote for *Time* and *Life* during the period he called in *Witness* "The Tranquil Years" conspicuously lacks the power that *Witness* itself, the posthumous *Cold Friday*, and his letters to William F. Buckley, Jr. possess. That is not entirely Chambers's fault either; the pieces for *Time* and *Life* contain most of the flaws those magazines have inflicted on the reading public throughout their history. Usually, when Chambers's own glimpses of some of the major minds of his era—Einstein, Toynbee, Niebuhr, Joyce—were allowed to be seen, they were quickly dimmed by editorially necessary trivia about personalities and the glib oversimplifications in which American mass journalism likes to swaddle itself.



Krystyna Jachniewicz

Nor, probably, was Chambers yet capable of that power. Only when the ordeal of the Hiss Case had brought him to that "last path of the earth, in the Scythian country, in the untrodden solitude" of which he wrote in *Cold Friday*, when his mind had been stripped and concentrated on the meaning of his life and its meaning for the West, did he become privy to his country's fate and able to foretell and analyze it in his final testimony.

Yet the glimpses are there, and to those who recognize in Whittaker Chambers not only a man who altered the course of history but also one of the most compelling American writers of this century, Mr. Teachout's anthology is indispensable. It includes four short stories Chambers wrote for *The New Masses* while he was still a fledgling *apparatchik*. It continues with all the major essays and reviews he wrote for *Time* and *Life* in the 1940's, when his mind had been cleared of Marxism and was beginning to see more clearly the lines his age was etching in the dust of history, down through his contributions to *The American Mercury* and *National Review*, when he had become the prophet for a cause. But even in the early short stories, despite their rigid adherence to the party line, the embryo of the mature Chambers is present.

The major value of Mr. Teachout's collection consists not so much in the intrinsic worth of what Chambers was writing in his early post-communist period as in what these pieces show about the development of Chambers's mind and world view. By examining what he had to say in the Tranquil Years, before the Hiss Case forced him for the rest of his life to defend his own integrity and to play a role that merely distracted him and his readers from his essential message, we now can see

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more clearly not only what Chambers had to tell the West about its enemies in Moscow and their agents in Washington, but also what he wanted to tell the West about itself. That message, whatever happens to communism and the West in the future, is likely to prove more enduring than the facts about the Woodstock typewriter, the prothonotary warbler, and the vapid young traitor whose perjury made Chambers famous.

"The social symbol of our age," Chambers wrote in *The American Mercury* in 1944, "is autolysis, a medical term for the process whereby the stomach, for example, by a subtle derangement of its normal functions, destroys itself by devouring its own tissues." He could not, before the Hiss Case, fully substantiate his belief, implicit in this passage, that the West was dying by suicide. To have done so would have involved telling what he later would tell the House Un-American Activities Committee about his own descent into the Marxist Avernus, and Chambers was not yet ready to tell, nor was the world yet prepared to listen.

Throughout these popular pieces there runs the theme of the world-historical meaning of current events and the suggestion that the West, even as it was crowing with glee in its triumph over the Axis and its grand illusion of global peace and progress, is of the same flesh with Ninevah and Tyre, yet finds its own mortality altogether inconceivable. But the experiences that had brought Chambers to this bleak vision remained known only to him, and his effort to convince his readers of his belief, never quite fully stated in these pieces, relied on symbolism and suggestion rather than the police-blotter factuality of *Witness* and the hearing room. "The rouge applied by an undertaker to the lips of a 20th Century corpse," he wrote in *Time* in 1947, "is one measure of 20th Century civilization. But modern man's effort to deny or minimize death is part of a much more important necessity — the need to deny or minimize God."

To Chambers, the most complete organization of that need was communism itself, "the world's second oldest faith," as he calls it in *Witness*, whose "promise was whispered in the first days of the new Creation under the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: 'Ye shall be as gods.'" But communism was not the only manifestation of that need, which permeated the West and, in what became Chambers's view of history, modernity itself. From Toynbee's *A Study of History*, Chambers came to believe that "one hopeful meaning stands out: not materialist but psychic factors are the decisive forces of history." His seven-part series for *Life* on "The History of Western Culture" extrapolates the "psychic factors" that had brought the West to the brink of its dissolution.

The Enlightenment, he wrote, was the "one great source of modern culture." It "revised the fundamental idea of man's destiny and purpose which civilization had developed over more than 1,000 years" and was "the intellectual chemistry whose gradual precipitate was the modern mind — secular, practical, and utilitarian." The denouement of the Enlightenment he saw in the Edwardian era, which was

> the fulfillment of the 18th Century's Enlightenment, and the Enlightenment's basic intuition was the idea of progress — the belief that man, by the aid of science, can achieve a perfection of living limited only by the imaginative powers of the mind. Implicitly the Enlightenment denied faith in the name of science and the Kingdom of God in the name of the kingdom of this world. It whetted that knife-edge, dividing the world's greatest focuses of force — the power of religion and the power of science — along which the thoughtful man has teetered ever since.

The Edwardians — not merely the British in the decade after Queen Victoria's death, but also the Americans and Europeans — wrapped themselves in the exuberant confidence of the Enlightenment's legacy. "A new tempo was entering life with the abridgement of time and distance by speed and the multiplication of power by the generation of energy. . . . The Edwardian era was one of those rare interludes of history where everybody who could possibly do so had a wonderful time."

Of course, it was all an illusion, had been illusory ever since the Enlightenment, and would be dashed in World War I and the Russian Revolution, the political, economic, and intellectual wreckage of the 20th century, and the chaos that ensued. It was neither Voltaire nor the Edwardians who understood what would happen when the illusion broke, but a squat little gentleman unknown to and unimagined by their cherubic innocence. "When the train of history makes a sharp turn," said Lenin, "the passengers who do not have a good grip on their seats are thrown off."

The shallowness of the Enlightenment and its legacy in the liberal, democratic, and industrialized West in Chambers's view had weakened the grip of Western men on their seats and had failed to prepare them to survive the sharp turn history was about to take. That Chambers saw the weakness of Western liberalism in the face of the challenge is clear enough. That is why he can never be a hero to contemporary anti-Soviet social democrats and neoconservatives who pride themselves on their pragmatic humanism and their own adherence to the values of the liberal, modern West. Only by ignoring Chambers's dark vision of human unreason and sin and his belief that liberalism was a close cousin to communism, or by twisting him into a Third Generation yuppie chirping about SDI, tax cuts, and Jonas Savimbi, can today's "right" honestly regard Chambers as an icon. "For of course," he wrote in *Life* in 1953,

> there is a strong family resemblance between the Communist state and the welfare state. The ends each has in view have much in common. But the methods proposed for reaching them radically differ. Each is, in fact, in direct competition with the other, since each offers itself as an alternative solution for the crisis of the 20th Century; and Fabian Britain has at last supplanted Soviet Russia in the eyes of political liberals when they look abroad. Nevertheless, that family resemblance is nerve-wearing, since all the minds that note it are not equally discriminating, especially



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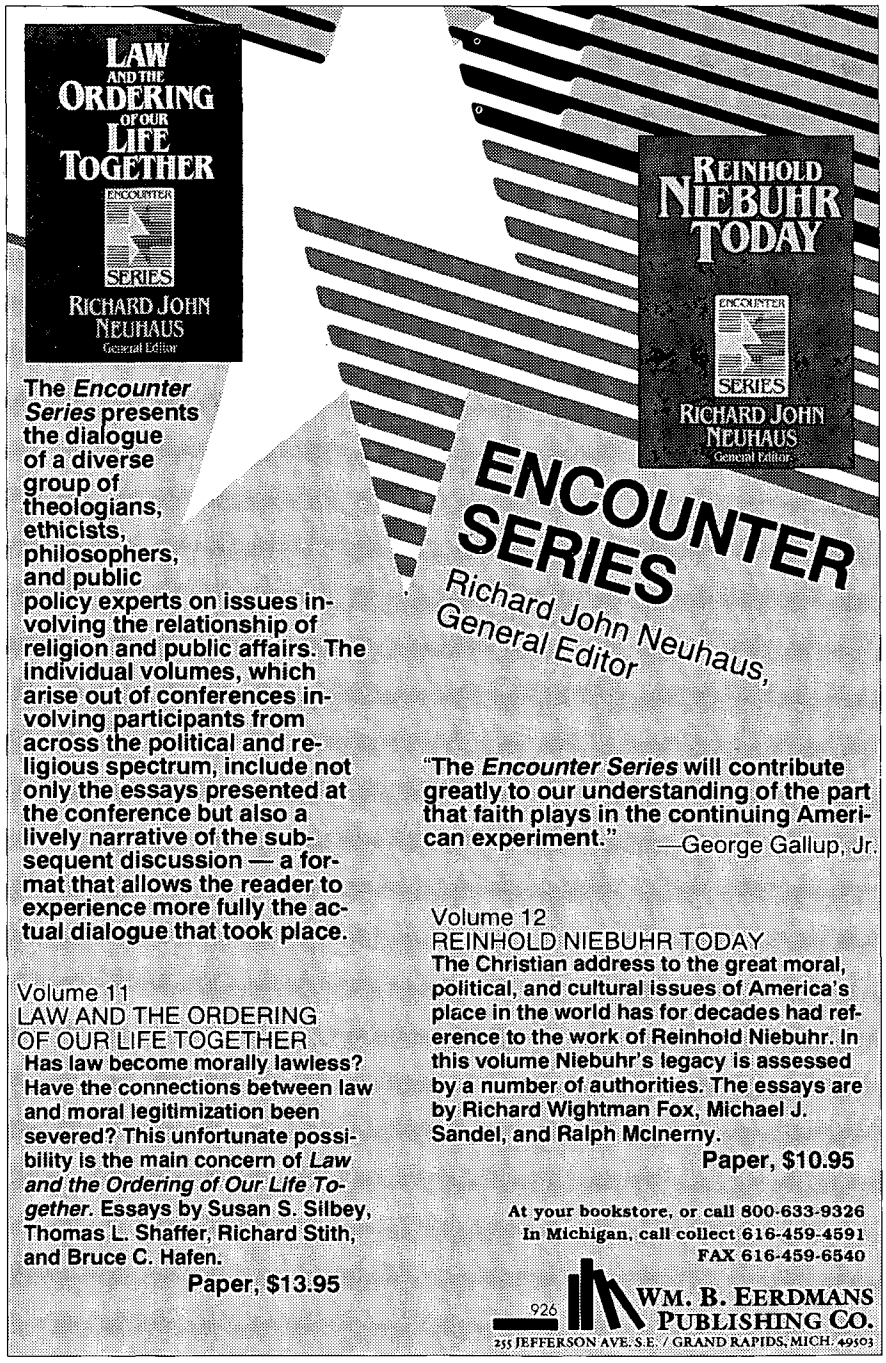
> in a nation that has only just become conscious of Communism and still rejects socialism. So, at every move against Communism, liberal views come unglued, and liberal voices go shrill, fearing that, by design or error, the move may be against themselves.

Yet if Chambers rejected 20th-century liberalism, he was not much more sympathetic to the conservatives of the 1950's. He declined to attach himself in any way to Joe McCarthy, less perhaps from dislike of the man than a belief that McCarthy would eventually taint his witness. He was not comfortable at *National Review* and found preposterous the quaint dogmas of classical liberalism dressed up as conservatism. In a letter to Buckley in 1957, he called the free-market economist Ludwig von Mises "a goose," and Frank Meyer's self-appointment as the ideological gatekeeper of the American right seems first to have amused, then bored, him. The ideas of Meyer and Russell Kirk struck Chambers as "chiefly an irrelevant buzz." Only with Buckley himself and with James Burnham did he seem to share anything like a common outlook, and at last he resigned from *National Review*, acknowledging to Buckley and himself that he was not a conservative in any serious sense, but "a man of the Right."

What exactly Chambers meant by this term is far from clear, but he contrasted it with "conservatism" and seems to have identified it with a defense of capitalism. "I am a man of the Right because I mean to uphold capitalism in its American version. But I claim that capitalism is not, and by its essential nature cannot conceivably be, conservative." Yet despite his identification with capitalism, almost nowhere did Chambers offer an explicit defense of it, and in both his letters to Buckley and in a *National Review* piece of 1958 on federal farm policy, he was perfectly conscious of the contradiction between capitalism and conservatism and the link between capitalism and the advance of socialism. Like most conservatives and like his neighbors in rural Maryland, Chambers saw the freedom and independence of farmers threatened by federal regulation of agriculture. But he also believed such controls were "inescapable."

> The problem of farm surpluses is, of course, a symptom of a crisis of abundance. It is the gift of science and technology — improved machines, fertilizers, sprays, antibiotic drugs, and a general rising efficiency of know-how. The big farm, constantly swallowing its smaller neighbors, is a logical resultant of those factors. . . . If farmers really meant to resist these trends, to be conservative, to conserve "a way of life" (as they often say), they would smash their tractors with sledges, and go back to the horse-drawn plow. Of course, they have no intention of doing anything so prankish. . . . Controls of one kind or another are here to stay so long as science and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technology are with us.

Chambers's belief, expressed as early as 1944, that "the land-owning farmer, big and little, is the conservative base of every healthy society, no matter how many miles of factories may be required to keep the average city dweller in a state of civilized neurosis," reflects an apparent sympathy for agrarianism and the American South. But his recognition of the self-destructive dynamic of modern capitalism, relying on science, sponsoring continuous enlargement and social innovation, and eventually spawning socialism, brings him close to Burnham and Joseph Schumpeter.

Nowhere in all his writing does Chambers more clearly show the weaknesses of unrestrained capitalism and its kinship with communism than in his devastation of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* in *National Review* in 1957. "Randian Man," he wrote, "like Marxian man, is made the center of a godless world."

> . . . if Man's "heroism". . . no longer derives from God, or is not a function of that godless integrity which was a root of Nietzsche's anguish, then Man becomes merely the most consuming of animals, with glut as the condition of his happiness and its replenishment his foremost activity.

Like the materialism of "godless Communism," the hedonism of godless capitalism winds up as the tool of a political despotism that manages the pursuit of happiness as pleasure.

> In the name of free enterprise, therefore, she plumps for a technocratic elite (I find no more inclusive word than technocratic to bracket the industrial-financial-engineering caste she seems to have in mind). When she calls "productive achievement" man's "noblest activity," she means, almost exclusively, technological achievement, supervised by such a managerial political bureau.

The significance of Chambers's witness, then, is considerably diminished if it is mistaken for merely an account of Soviet communism and its Western stooges. His point throughout his writings in the 1940's and 1950's was that the roots of communism lie in the West itself, and that they flourish because the modern age has chosen to credit the serpent's promise. That promise and its lethal consequences for the West were as palpable to him in the United States of Truman and Eisenhower as they had been under the Edwardians, and as they were in the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin. Only when the West had awakened to the falsehood of the promise could it bear what he called "that more terrible witness" by which it would destroy its external enemy and begin to purge itself of its internal toxins. But he had no expectation that the West would do so, and no suggestions on how to do it.

For all the authority Chambers commanded in *Witness*, in the last decade of his life he seemed uncertain about many things and had no clear answers for the political crises of his age. He was not at bottom a political thinker but a Christian existentialist who shunned politics by enveloping himself in suffering and by dwelling on the intractability of man's fate without God. Christianity and the tragic vision of history became for him an intellectual crutch with which history's walking wounded could limp away from a battle they could not win. Like Burnham, as Chambers himself wrote to Buckley, he sought "to understand what the reality of the desperate forces is, and what is their relationship in violent flux," and he had what he called "the direct glance that measures what it leaves without fear and without regret." But despite his grasp of the main forces of the 20th century, Chambers was unable to communicate the realities he saw in a form that would allow a secular resolution of the challenges they presented. Hence, his response was one of other-worldly withdrawal — from journalism and *National Review* to his farm and family, to a furtively private pietism, to an autobiographical justification of his vision, to a handful of occasional essays for the conservative press, to an intensely emotional (often maudlin) prose published mainly in posthumous fragments and filled with introspection, grotesque anecdotes, bizarre characters, and metaphors of death, lunacy, and decay. Chambers relentlessly smashed his readers' faces against the window panes of history and forced them to look at scenes few of them wanted to see. But having shown them the worst that human beings in this century could do, he had little to offer them except to burrow deeper within a storm cellar of intense devotionalism. His *oeuvre*, for all its merits of style and truth and all that it has to tell the West about why the West is dying, is not what a Marine wading up the seabeach at Tarawa would carry in his knapsack.

## LIBERAL ARTS

### CRIME AND STATE LOTTERIES

A January 1990 article in the *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* gives the lie to the idea that state lotteries produce revenue without major social consequences. A study by John Mikesell and Maureen A. Pirog-Good, professors at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs, found that the rate of crimes-against-property per 100,000 population increases by nearly 3 percent when a state opens a lottery. Based on the average population of states in 1987, this rate implies an increase of an additional 5,478 property offenses in each state in every year that a lottery is operated. "That lotteries attract organized criminals, are used for money laundering, create feelings of relative deprivation, further skew the income distributions, and/or foster a 'something for nothing' atmosphere are possible explanations for our results," they conclude.



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# That Infamous Diary

by Murray N. Rothbard

*"Without the aid of prejudice and custom, I should not be able to find my way across the room."*

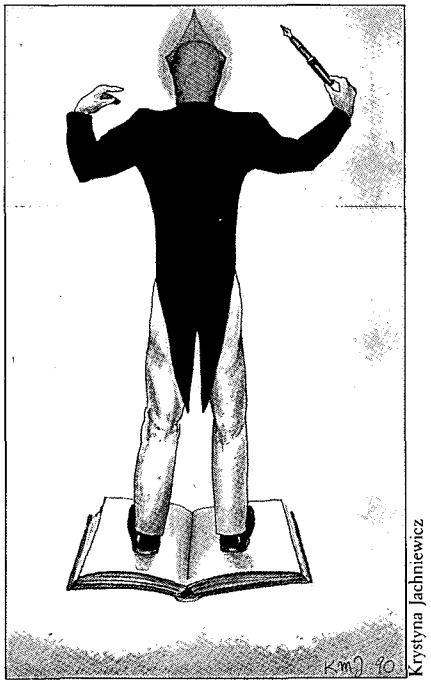
—William Hazlitt

**The Diary of H.L. Mencken**
*Edited by Charles A. Fecher*
*New York: Alfred A. Knopf;*
*476 pp., $30.00*

◆

Rarely does a published diary, even of a celebrated writer, become anything more than fodder for the specialist. Yet H.L. Mencken's diary has been turned into a *cause célèbre* by its editor, Charles A. Fecher. Fecher's introduction is probably the most spectacular knifing by an editor of his own author since Max Lerner, then in the Marxist phase of his endless career, denounced Adam Smith, in the introduction to the Modern Library edition of the *Wealth of Nations* (1937), as "an unconscious mercenary in the service of a rising capitalist class." Equally in tune with the dominant cultural climate as Lerner had been in the 1930's, Fecher's hatchet job has succeeded in organizing a veritable lynch mob against the shade of the Sage of Baltimore. The gist of the lynching was summed up in one large-type newspaper headline: "Mencken Pro-Hitler, Diary Reveals."

Fecher's introduction is reminiscent of nothing so much as the immortal line of Claude Rains in *Casablanca*: he is shocked . . . shocked to discover from the diaries, unsealed only since 1981, that Mencken hated Franklin D. Roosevelt, that he strongly opposed America's entry into World War II, and—always the killing thrust—that: "Let it be said at once, clearly and unequivocally: Mencken was an anti-Semite." Carl Bode, author of a lengthy and tedious biography (*Mencken*, 1969), also weighs in, professing himself "stunned" at Mencken's extensive, "knee-jerk" anti-Semitism, and Jonathan Alter, in *Newsweek*,




adds, for good measure, that the diary reveals Mencken to have been "bitter" and "brooding" as well.

A lonely, brooding anti-Semite and pro-Nazi sounds like nothing so much as the psychological profile of the modal alleged assassin-of-Presidents that infests American mythology. Since in our contemporary culture Fecher's charge is the moral equivalent of stating that "Mencken was a child molester," he is morally obligated to present convincing evidence for his claim.

But first, Fecher's other two accusations. Coming from a Mencken scholar who has written a book (albeit dull and plodding) on *Mencken: A Study of His Thought* (1978), Fecher's purported shock and amazement at Mencken's hatred of FDR and his opposition to World War II is simply beyond belief. You don't have to be steeped in Mencken's published essays and letters to know that he hated Roosevelt and opposed US entry into World War II. The diary entries are, if anything, surpassed in intensity by Mencken's published writings. Far worse, Fecher panders to the notorious historical amnesia of most Americans by acting as if anyone with such outlandish views must have been a lone nut and, at least implicitly, pro-Nazi. Fecher conveniently ignores the fact that millions of Americans hated FDR with equal intensity (though not with Mencken's sparkling wit), and that a majority of Americans strongly opposed US entry into World War II.

The charge of anti-Semitism is even more to Fecher's discredit. The canard that he was an anti-Semite and racist has long been hurled at Mencken, especially by his longtime assistant at the *American Mercury*, the humorless Charles Angoff (in his scurrilous *H.L. Mencken*, 1956). Much to Mencken's amusement, the Progressive Party of Maryland introduced a resolution at the end of the 1948 national Progressive convention, denouncing his articles on the convention as "Red-baiting," "Jew-baiting," and "Hitlerite," and Mencken was greatly disappointed when the convention's chairman, Albert J. Fitzgerald, sensibly ruled the resolution out of order.

Charles Fecher, however, faced a special problem in levying the accusation of bigotry. For in his 1978 book on Mencken, Fecher had robustly and quite correctly rebutted the charges of anti-Semitism and racism (*Mencken*, pp. 25-26, 118-19, and especially p. 181n). Fecher might have added that, in addition to the fact of his having many close Jewish friends, Mencken, in 1938, called for admitting all Jewish refugees into the United States. Therefore, in order to execute a convincing turnabout, Fecher *had* to claim that his current flip-flop stemmed from the alleged revelations in the recently unsealed diaries.

But on the very evidence of this diary, the charge of anti-Semitism is arrant and malicious nonsense. It is well-known that the published Mencken often used colorful categories to

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designate ethnic groups. But Mencken's designations of Jews in the diary are purely descriptive, or even favorable. For example, Fecher damns Mencken as anti-Semitic because he notes in his dairy that a woman he met was a "French Jewess." But was Mencken then a vicious anti-German because he describes one Dietrich as a "huge German"? Only in a debased culture where a simple notation that someone is Jewish is considered gravely "anti-Semitic" could Fecher get away with such an asinine charge. Moreover, Mencken's label takes on further meaning in his very next sentence, unmentioned by Fecher: that "though she [the "French Jewess"] is polite, she finds it hard to conceal her distrust of me as a German." (*Diary*, p. 55). Note that this entry was made before Hitler's access to power, when the "French" root of her seeming anti-Germanism would leap to mind more than the Jewish one.

Another supposed evidence of Mencken's bias is his diary reference to Lawrence Spivak, later publisher of the *American Mercury*, as a "young Harvard Jew." (p. 71.) But Fecher once again fails to mention the context, in this case that Mencken immediately goes on to praise Spivak as "energetic and intelligent." So that apparently, in Fecher's grotesque universe, even a *favorable* reference to a Jew is deemed evidence of "anti-Semitism."

But the clincher in demonstrating the odiousness of Fecher's tactics is that (1) there are very few references to Jews at all in the *Diary*, and (2) there is nothing nearly as critical of Jews as in Mencken's letter to his old friend Roscoe Peacock of April 30, 1931, published in 1961, in the delightful collection of *Letters of H.L. Mencken*, edited by Guy J. Forgue. Mencken was replying to a letter in which Peacock complained about the behavior of Jews on an ocean liner; he stated that, by and large, Jews are much more intelligent and charming than other Americans, but that "I agree with you that the unpleasant ones are unpleasant almost beyond endurance."

Since Fecher is clearly well aware of the Forgue collection, we can only conclude that he is being disingenuous in basing his *volte face* on the *Diary*. Might it rather be that Fecher leveled the dread charge of anti-Semitism in order to hype the book?

If there was anything that Mencken truly hated, it was the despotism and puritanism of Prohibition, and if there was any class of men that he truly disliked, apart from his own ethnic group of Anglo-Saxons, it was the Baptists and Methodists whom he charged with fastening Prohibition on America. Yet, far from accusing him of bigotry and "insensitivity" toward Baptists, the Liberal Establishment has always delighted in Mencken's "irreverence" on

## Million-Dollar Dandruff

*by John W. Little II*

I'm keening and mooning
Because my de Kooning
Is fading and falling apart.
My Pollock is popping
Its drips keep on dropping
Is this what they mean by "pop" art?

My Schnabel is shedding
Like rice at a wedding
Please call the conservator quickly.
My Rothko is failing
The colors keep paling
Resulting in shades rather sickly.

My Rauschenberg's peeling
Like a very old ceiling
Oh, Robert, pray what can I do?
My Leslie is flaking
My knees are a-quaking,
Miss Handlemen, hand me the glue.

My Warhol is waning
Which needs some explaining,
So why did he leave out the gesso?
The pinks in my Stella
Are starting to yella
My gallery's a helluva mess, oh!

*Envoi:*

That euphemism, "inherent vice"
(The modern art insurance rating)
Means, "Boys, it's time to up the price . . .
The g-----n thing's disintegrating!"



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this and similar issues. It was only when he shifted his dazzling and witty invective to the new and more sanctified despotism of the New Deal that Mencken has been cast down as a nasty reactionary. Mencken once wrote that his basic method was to "heave the dead cat into the temple" of social idols, to demonstrate to the faithful that lightning would not strike him dead on the spot. Unfortunately, what Mencken termed the "pecksniffs" and "wowsers" of the New Deal proved far more durable idols than those who had whooped it up for Prohibition.

To left-liberals like Fecher, it is "inconsistent" and "inexplicable" that Mencken could denounce politicians as a class and yet admire and support Maryland's Governor Albert Ritchie, a Jeffersonian Democrat; that he could detest and denounce Methodists and Prohibitionists, and yet be a longtime friend and admirer of Methodist (and Prohibitionist) Bishop James Cannon; or, for that matter, that he could attack segregation laws and be a "racist" or have close Jewish friends and be "anti-Semitic."

But if Fecher and other liberal critics truly understood their subject, the mystery could be cleared up easily. Typically, leftists are the sort of people who proclaim their love of "humanity" in the abstract, while being nasty and uncaring toward individuals in the concrete. As a man of the right, H.L. Mencken was precisely the opposite. Caustic toward mankind, or groups of men, in the aggregate, he was uniformly gentle, courteous, and loving toward his individual acquaintances and friends.

Setting the artificial *brouhaha* aside, there *is* in fact much for Mencken buffs to learn from his *Diary*. Not that he had a "dark" side, not that he was lonely and bitter, not that he was a closet Nazi or anti-Semite. Quite the contrary. While the diary unsurprisingly lacks much of the coruscating wit that pervades his essays and letters, it provides an unfailingly fascinating insight into the marvelous life that Mencken led, a life of productive work and lively and engaging conversation with a raft of close and interesting friends. And particularly we see Mencken as a moral and caring man who loved his wife deeply and was greatly devoted to his friends. Thus, he laments throughout the *Diary* that numerous writer friends (Sinclair Lewis, Scott Fitzgerald, and others) were killing themselves with drink. And this from a beer lover who proudly referred to himself as "omnibibulous," but deplored the excess of drunkenness.

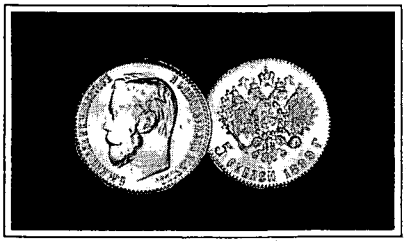
Mencken, furthermore, may have been scornful of men in the mass, but he was so worried about hurting the feelings of men and women he knew personally that he ordered the diaries sealed for 25 years after his death, and even then he asked that access to his diary be strictly limited to scholars. Fecher concedes that the Enoch Pratt Free Library, custodians of Mencken's papers, violated the wishes of Mencken by publishing his diary.

In short, the true Mencken buff emerges from the diary with an even higher appreciation of HLM than ever before.

Mencken was a doughty and happy warrior who helped to liberate the American language and culture from pompous, pretentious, and flatulent writing and thinking. He was a staunch libertarian who often declared that he believed in absolute individual liberty, "up to the limit of the unbearable, and even beyond." Mencken's reputation is now under renewed assault by a malevolent left-Puritan culture that makes the old puritanism refreshingly libertarian by contrast. Virtually every day we find a new puerility or a new sacred cow that seems to cry out for Mencken's cleansing treatment. But then we realize that under present conditions, Mencken would be hard put to get published at all. The consolation is that none of this fate would surprise Mencken, who, as early as 1934, in deploring the rise of the New Deal, wrote to Roscoe Peacock that "if I really believed that I had left a Mark upon my Time I think I'd leap into the nearest ocean," for "the American people are more insane today than they were when I began to write."

Perhaps so, but there is always a remnant who understands, and all the returns are not yet in. If totalitarian communism in Eastern Europe can collapse like a house of cards, perhaps some day the softer tyranny of left puritanism shall also disappear. Then, the great Mencken, despite himself, will be seen to have Made a Mark on more times than his own. ◁▷


# The Last Gold Coin of the Romanovs



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# A Good Man Is Hard to Find

*by Forrest McDonald*

**And the Walls Came Tumbling Down**
*by Ralph David Abernathy*
*New York: Harper & Row;*
*638 pp., $25.00*

◆

The road to hell, I was taught as a child, is paved with good intentions. Surely no one could fault the intentions of the Reverend Ralph David Abernathy — Martin Luther King's right arm and successor in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference — as revealed in this fascinating and moving autobiography. Inspired by faith in Divine mercy, by a Christian vision of brotherhood among the races, and by hope of succor for the poor, the weak, and the oppressed, Abernathy has devoted his life to the cause unstintingly, courageously, even heroically. Moreover, grand as this dream may have been, it was the moderate position in the context of the civil rights movement of the 1960's, even as SCLC's advocacy of nonviolent demonstrations was the tactic of moderation. SCLC stood midway between an older generation that preferred not to rock the boat and a younger one, led by the likes of Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael, whose counsel was "Burn, baby, burn."

But the enterprise was inherently flawed. For openers, almost extra-human discipline was required to keep nonviolent demonstrations nonviolent, and though SCLC managed to do so for a while, the movement ultimately and inevitably got out of hand. The riots in Watts (about which Abernathy is strangely silent) followed the last great peaceful march at Selma by only five months. And even in the most controlled phases of the movement, there was something intrinsically violent in the massing of protesters; by Abernathy's own account, though the demonstrators were carefully taught restraint, their purpose was to provoke a violent response by law enforcement officers and thus attract media attention and capture the sympathy of the nation. Finally, whatever the philosophical merits of civil disobedience, its destructiveness is potentially enormous, for any society that is restrained only by individual conscience inexorably degenerates into a Hobbesian state of nature.

Still, Abernathy and King were asking no more than they were constitutionally and morally entitled to, and, given everything, nonviolent resistance was possibly the only effective means available. Besides, it worked — for a time. The most difficult and most successful venture was that in Birmingham early in 1963. Despite court decisions declaring that *de jure* segregation of public facilities was unconstitutional, Birmingham remained rigidly segregated, and its police commissioner, Bull Connor, was a brutally sadistic racist. But after weeks of daily demonstrations and continuous boycotts, the city's business leaders negotiated a desegregation agreement. That campaign was followed in August by the march on Washington, where King gave his "I have a dream" speech before a crowd of 250,000, which in turn was followed by the enactment of the Public Accommodations Act of 1964. A year later came the march from Selma to Montgomery, which resulted in the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

That was the climax. Those in the center of the movement were soon to learn some painful lessons; for the walls that had come tumbling down were those of a Southern world that — the humiliations of Jim Crow and the brutality of Bull Connor notwithstanding — was a good deal kinder and gentler than the world on the outside.

The lessons began in 1966, when the SCLC invaded Chicago to form a coalition of black groups and "dramatize the plight of urban blacks to the decent people of Chicago and to the nation." Instead, Abernathy and his associates encountered intense hatred — intra- as well as interracial — and a solidly entrenched system. Strange as it may seem, they had as yet experienced little of either. Abernathy's description of his childhood will astound those who know the segregated South only as a stereotype. He had grown up in rural Alabama, surrounded by a loving (and disciplining) family. The one ugly racial incident in his youth came when a drunken white taunted and vaguely threatened him, but the drunk was quickly silenced by another white: "Don't you touch that boy! That's the son of W.L. Abernathy." Abernathy served in a segregated unit in the Army during World War II, but he was discriminated against primarily as a Southerner, not as a black. During the demonstrations in the South, white officialdom had harshly maltreated the marchers, but with surprisingly few exceptions the white citizenry had looked passively upon their doings. By contrast, in Chicago, the Daley political machine neutralized them through co-option, while the white citizens, seething with rage, hurled epithets, bricks, and bottles at them. Even more shocking to Abernathy was the behavior of Chicago's blacks. "We had no idea," he writes, that black "gangs existed in Chicago . . . looting, robbing, raping, and terrorizing whole neighborhoods. . . . They had nothing but contempt for the church and for religion, which meant that we could not appeal to them." Worse yet was the fierce hostility of black jailers, guards,

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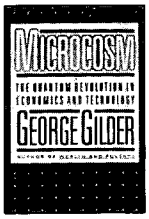

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and wardens: "It never occurred to me that blacks would hold such jobs and treat other blacks in such a manner."

The harshest lessons came in Washington during the summer of 1968, shortly after King's assassination, and took the form of challenges to Abernathy's naive and endearing faith in the goodness of his fellow creatures. King had planned, and Abernathy carried out, a project called Resurrection City: he leased space in the Washington mall and erected a tent city, in which poor people of mixed race and ethnicity were to "live together in peace and mutual respect" for a few weeks, thus simultaneously impressing Congress with the plight of the poor and setting up a "model for the rest of the nation." But things did not work out that way. First, a group of young blacks from Chicago and Detroit appeared, formed a gang, and set up a "protection business." Then it turned out that the diverse groups—whites, blacks, Hispanics, Indians—flatly refused to be integrated. Even in that mini-village, "They not only preferred to live in separate groups, they *insisted* upon it." Resurrection City ended as a fiasco, evoking no government response. And Abernathy came to a startling realization—"A good many people in government were quite happy with the status quo. They *liked* the idea of a huge, economically dependent population. The fact that there were third-generation welfare families pleased them."

Abernathy headed the SCLC for eight more years, but for practical purposes the movement (and the book) was over. As for the book, it has been criticized for its comments about Martin Luther King's sexual prowess, but that is a tangential matter that simply sets the record straight in a quiet way. As for the movement, it did help bring about a better South, for blacks and whites alike; and middle- and upper-class blacks elsewhere are perhaps better off. For the teeming masses, however, the urban slums were already becoming a hell, and what the civil rights movement did for them was to prompt paternalistic legislation that made their hell permanent.

*Forrest McDonald is a professor of history at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.*

# Large Canvas, Long Reach

*by Fred Chappell*

**Soldier's Joy**
*by Madison Smartt Bell*
*New York: Ticknor and Fields;*
*465 pp., $19.95*

◆

Madison Smartt Bell has a penchant for keeping his fiction mysterious at its deepest core. The protagonist of his 1985 novel, *Waiting for the End of the World*, is a fellow called Larkin who is out to destroy New York City for no reason a reader can ever discern. The willful wackos who give *The Washington Square Ensemble* (1983) its title have individual designs and schedules which are brought to light only fitfully. Bell's finest work so far is a collection, *Zero db and Other Stories* (1987), in which two of the best stories, "The Structure and Meaning of Dormitory and Food Services" and "I Love NY," are con-

## BRIEF MENTIONS

**NEW INDIVIDUALIST REVIEW, edited by Ralph Raico, *et al.* Indianapolis: Liberty Press; 991 pp., $14.00**

The editors at Liberty Press, who take the long view of things, continue to issue handsome, durable reprints of conservative classics—at prices recalling those of the 1960's. Here they've collected all the issues of the *New Individualist Review*. This little journal, which appeared from 1961-1968 and had such a heavy impact on America, was the creation of students at the University of Chicago. Professors Richard M. Weaver, F.A. Hayek, and Milton Friedman made up the journal's first advisory board and contributed articles.

Over its life the *Review* printed seminal writing on free market and conservative topics by remarkably mature students and by Russell Kirk, Ludwig von Mises, George Stigler, Benjamin Rogge, and other already established men. What characterized the *Review* writers was their rigor of thought and concern for principles, features that coexist naturally. The result is that their articles are a valid and contemporary for today, especially when so much of what passes for conservative discussion becomes quickly dated because the writers let principles trail far behind their preoccupation with the nuts and bolts of public policy.

—*James B. Graves*

**THE SOUTHERN TRADITION AT BAY: A HISTORY OF POSTBELLUM THOUGHT by Richard M. Weaver, edited by George Core and M.E. Bradford; Chicago and Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway; 380 pp., $21.95 (hardcover) $11.95 (paper)**

I was a still young man when *The Southern Tradition at Bay* first appeared in 1968. Reading it was for me a sustained intellectual transport. I recall at the time wishing my paternal grandmother were still living so I could tell her I had found proof—and something more—of all she'd seen and heard and told me of her girlhood in Alabama, then recovering from those violations collectively known as "Reconstruction."

This book is Richard Weaver's vindication of the 19th-century South, not so much as a region but as the legitimate bearer of the old European culture in America—"the last non-materialist civilization in the Western world," as he puts it. Weaver's thrust is radical and revolutionary, in the good sense of those words: going to the roots of our present crises and woes and, by steady reference to principles, overturning encrusted notions that have inflicted those woes. "And the challenge," says Weaver, "is to save the human spirit by re-creating a non-materialist society. Only this can save us from a future of nihilism."

For those people who habitually swear by Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences* but affect to dismiss *The Southern Tradition* as a product merely of sectional touchiness: though published posthumously, this latter title was Weaver's *first and basic book*, a revision of his 1943 doctoral thesis. *Ideas* is largely an extended commentary on *The Southern Tradition*, without the overtly Southern references. Thus to reject the parent but accept the child is (to change figures) something like an attempt to throw out your cake and eat it too.

—*James B. Graves*



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cerned with distance and powerlessness, the difficulties that people encounter in trying to act charitably. *Straight Cut* (1986) is a fairly straightforward suspense novel; the motivation for the drug smuggling it treats is greed complicated by some perfunctory existentialist posturing. In 1987 Bell published *The Year of Silence*, a novel that takes his reliance upon mystery to what may be an ultimate limit. In this book the protagonist, a suicide named Marian, is already dead; the story is about her absence from the world, the hole she leaves in the scheme of things.

In his newest novel, *Soldier's Joy*, Bell once more hides the heart of his narrative, the motives of his characters, in purblind mystery. But this time the strategy is unsuccessful. A darkened and ominous atmosphere does not exude from the groundwork of the narrative, as in *The Year of Silence*; there is only a flatly lit murk that lifts in patches to show a banal and featureless landscape. Reading *Soldier's Joy* is like driving in night fog through the Dismal Swamp; headlights only make the mist more opaque and when it sometimes disperses, one section of tree-pierced water looks the same as any other.

Joseph Conrad pretty much perfected the art of luscious obfuscation in fiction. *The Nigger of the Narcissus* and *Under Western Eyes* are all the more entrancing because we understand that we shall never completely understand them. But in *Victory* this calculated mysteriousness is clumsily artificial, and in *Lord Jim* it seems only a pretext for long-windedness. In order for mysteriousness to succeed as a strategy, it is necessary to have the kind of story in which it must not be noticed as a strategy.

Bell's *The Year of Silence* is just that kind of story. There is a plangency about the design and about the deliberate concealment of relationships that gives the book force and purpose. We say unthinkingly that drugs "undermine" our society, but this novel shows what the word truly means: that some of the foundation stones, citizens benevolent though weak-minded, are being removed. My description here makes the story sound moralistic, but it is not. It is a strong narrative, and the fact that we shall never know Marian, no matter how much we learn about her, only makes it stronger. Bell even manages to make clear the other side of the paradox; Marian was a closely private figure, and if we had known her more thoroughly as a person we would then know less of her circumstances than we do in her absence. *The Year of Silence* is a quintessential story of the megalopolis, a locale that Bell treats with relish, alert to its vibrancy as well as its hollow loneliness.

But *Soldier's Joy* is set in the countryside near Nashville, Tennessee, a place where everyone knows everything about everyone else. In order to position his characters in their customary taciturn isolation, Bell has had to imagine three persons — Laidlaw, Redmon, and Ratman — who come fairly close to being hermits. Other characters, the *soi-disant* Muslim, Raschid, and Laidlaw's girl friend, Adrienne, are wayward loners. In fact, the only truly communal group the novel admits is a bunch of bloodthirsty clodhoppers who seem to be amateur Klansmen.

In order to draw his separated figures together in present time Bell posits past histories in which they were connected. Laidlaw and Ratman were service buddies in Vietnam; Laidlaw and Redmon were childhood friends. But Laidlaw is white and Redmon black, and they must pay the price of interracial friendship. Here comes, therefore, the Klan to give them misery.

But these guys are Nam veterans, right? They ain't gonna let a buncha dumb rednecks mess them around. Right?

Right. But it takes 360 pages to set up this situation: in fact, it requires almost 200 pages for Laidlaw to be reunited with Redmon, so that the story can even begin to begin. Once it does start, it offers some lurid fun because it is amusing to watch the fiercely efficient weapons of contemporary warfare given employ in a civilian landscape. This imagery is what gave *First Blood*, the first Rambo movie, so much of its manic charm.

That film, sappy as it is, makes more sense than *Soldier's Joy*. Rambo was a much put-upon person. After all, the mean old sheriff treated him ugly just because he wore long hair, trampling his constitutional rights like grapes in a wine vat. A man can take only so much before he has to start fighting back, especially when the corrupt law enforcement is his enemy. These clichés make up the rationale for Rambo's private war.

But in *Soldier's Joy* Laidlaw and his friends decide to battle the Klan for reasons no better than impulse. The Klan is going to assassinate a black religious leader named Brother Jacob. It is unclear why they have decided to do so, and it is equally unclear why the Laidlaw coterie takes a notion to protect this evangelist. The Klan then decides instead to abduct Brother Jacob and march him through the woods. No one knows why: Laidlaw guesses that the Klansmen are merely improvising. In one of the ensuing ambushes Laidlaw kills someone he did not mean to kill, an innocent man named Earl Giles. His friend Redmon tries to console him: "Don't you know he ought not to been there?" Laidlaw replies: "But whoever said *I* was supposed to be running around with a gun in my hands?"

In a novel that is 465 pages long, this question should have been asked sooner than page 460.

The Vietnam experience produced among American veterans a large number of brokenhearted loners. But it also produced a large number of veteran alliances of various political stripes and with various social agendas. Part of the theme of *Soldier's Joy* seems to be that a need for personal revenge, coupled with guerrilla tactics, is a way to combat racial injustice. That is a ridiculous notion, of course, and when acted upon results in disaster. It is unlikely too that characters like Laidlaw and his friends, who are intelligent and canny however emotionally injured, could ever seriously find a motive for their actions in such a forlorn impulse. Bell does his best to convince us that the final carnage must take place, but does not succeed.

When large social concerns such as racial injustice are at stake in a novel, it is probably best for a writer to employ characters who are included in large social contexts. The embittered loner is a lyric and striking figure, but too self-involved and ill-informed, too personally passionate, for his actions to inscribe broad meanings upon social subjects. Both the Klansmen and their crusader combatants in *Soldier's Joy*



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are equally irrelevant, equally misguided, equally shabby.

But if Bell's talent and temperament impel him to choose the loner as protagonist, the present book also shows him as reaching out to broad concerns. He has not yet learned how to fill a large canvas, but he is one of the most gifted young novelists writing. With one kind of intense achievement behind him, he appears ready to strive toward a larger one. *Soldier's Joy*, though it fails, is a serious and necessary part of that attempt.

*Fred Chappell, a prolific poet and novelist, is the author most recently of* Brighten the Corner Where You Are *(St. Martin's).*

# The Houdini of Talcottville

***by Chilton Williamson, Jr.***

**Near the Magician: A Memoir of My Father, Edmund Wilson**
*by Rosalind Baker Wilson*
*New York: Grove Weidenfeld;*
*287 pp., $18.95*

◆

There are three ways in which the word "magician" may be applied to the critic and author Edmund Wilson: in his relationship to the printed word, in his relationships with women, and, more literally, as a straightforward reference to the fact of his having been a lifelong student and practitioner of "magical" tricks. All three senses of the term are met with and explored in this memoir by his daughter, and indeed all three are shown to be not just inseparable but closely intertwined.

This is an interesting, generous, dignified, touching, and finally rather sad book by a woman who, without complaining, nevertheless suggests by indirection a life—her own—scored strongly by loneliness and disappointment. Rosalind Baker Wilson was born in 1923 to Mary Blair, the distinguished actress and first wife of Edmund Wilson. Although the couple was married seven years, they remained separated during the last five of these: "The only times I ever saw my parents together," Miss Wilson writes, "were during the few minutes they visited when he dropped me off at her apartment [in New York City]." The child Rosalind had been delivered in her maternal grandmother's house in Red Bank, New Jersey, and went on living there for most of her childhood. "I stayed in Red Bank because my mother became tubercular; my grandmother felt, 'Rosalind is my child.' For the next twenty-eight years, my father was to come down to Red Bank almost every weekend and sometimes for longer periods of time to see his mother and me until I went out on my own, and even then we still met in Red Bank. I spent the summer months with him; between his marriages to Mary McCarthy and Margaret Canby, it was he and I alone during those months." And then, in a single paragraph's jump: "His trained nurse and I were with him when he died on June 12, 1972, in his mother's family house in the hamlet of Talcottville, town of Layden, county of Lewis, in upper New York State."

In his early middle age, Edmund Wilson suffered a nervous breakdown and spent time in a sanitarium, where he thought that a pencil was writing away for him all by itself. Afterward a psychiatrist told Miss Blair that he had a mother complex and ought never to marry anyone. Even after the psychobabble has been discounted, the biographical fact is that Wilson did indeed have a peculiar relationship with his mother (he was an only child) that lasted throughout her—and his—life: a relationship that was further complicated by the fact of his father's having left everything to Helen Mather Kimball Wilson, who doled money to her son when and in whatever amount she thought he required it—the when and what being frequently determined in his mother's mind by her evaluation of her granddaughter's needs. The frustrations attended—and produced—by these arrangements must often have seemed nearly intolerable to Rosalind's father; who, the daughter reports, reserved his worst scenes (with the possible exception of those he and his third wife, Miss McCarthy, collaborated on) for his visits to Red Bank, where a room of his own and iced bottles of ginger ale were invariably maintained and where he would lecture his mother on her alleged


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financial incapacities. In his rages, according to Miss Wilson, her father was "like a person possessed in the old-fashioned sense. Elizabeth Waugh [a Provincetown friend] . . . had thought my father looked like Caligula. Liquor may have brought it out sometimes, but it was fundamental and had nothing really to do with drinking. . . . He was fascinated by monsters, loved movie ones, referring to them affectionately: 'There's the old monster.' He doted on a record I gave him a few years before he died called 'The Monster Rally.' These creatures appealed to his terrible, lonely, isolated, evil side." When he wanted Rosalind with him, he wanted her; when not, then not. "He had known what he wanted to be at an early age and never let anything divert him from his chosen path. He was a domestic tyrant who never presided over a household in which the occupants were comfortable. It seemed almost as though if they were comfortable, he was not." Yet, when Rosalind had a breakdown of her own, "he saw me through gallantly"; and a valentine that he sent her in the final year of his life, for her said it all: "*Ours has been a strange and wonderful relationship.*"

Perhaps the best parts of the book deal with Miss Wilson's childhood summers spent with her father in Provincetown on Cape Cod, in those far-off times when the population included the Eugene O'Neills, the John Dos Passoses, and an assortment of White Russian émigrés, and before it had become an annexed colony of New York and Boston perverts. With her friends the Russians and others, Rosalind fished for pickerel that were transformed into gourmet meals, drank champagne, and listened to fine piano performances, from which she frequently arrived home in the early hours of the morning. One night, encountering resistance behind the door,

> I pushed a little farther, [and] recognized the leg of a rocker, on top of which was a Hitchcock chair, and on top of that a bread box, which came crashing down as per my father's plan. He had booby-trapped the door.
>
> "Rosalind!" he bellowed as only he could pronounce that name disapprovingly. "What are you doing?"
>
> "Getting in from George's."
>
> "What's going on?"
>
> "He played some music."
>
> "You woke me up."
>
> "Why did you put the chairs in front of the door?"
>
> "I don't know what you're talking about."

Underneath the joking, the japing, the gaming, the champagne, and the general good feeling, however, there is a hectic quality—or perhaps, there is simply the quality of something missing, of something left out. It is reasonable to suspect that her father's procession of marriages and *amours* has something to do with this; if so, Miss Wilson has been a brick in her description of them and of their *dramatis personae*, her stepmothers in particular. Of Margaret Canby, who died in California by falling off a stair as she left a dinner party, Rosalind says simply that she "adored" her; of Elena Mumm Wilson, Edmund's last wife (in his most successful marriage), that she was "a great lady, a fighter, a terrific worker"; and, while remarking of Mary McCarthy (from whom she learned "two practical things . . . : how to make the best cucumber sandwiches and Tom Collinses in the world") that "she was Anna Karenina without the warmth," she magnanimously relates that, in relation to herself at least, the novelist "did the best she could with the situation."

In *Near the Magician* there is but a single sentence referring to Wilson's love of magic tricks.

> It was a funny dichotomy in his character, this love of illusion and magic contrasting with his career, which depended on analyzing and taking apart literary works and removing the magic.

For Rosalind Wilson, I believe, her father was the master magician who succeeded in removing magic from literature even as he created it there, as he removed love from romance by marrying it. For her, he was an alchemist, capable of transmuting a thing into its opposite; and the emblem of his genius in doing this was the performance of his magical tricks—in which, by the way, he was not above stealing a playing card and keeping it until the spirit moved him to return it. "What can you say about a man like that?" the card's owner, the popular novelist Phyllis Duganne, had asked; and I suspect that the man's daughter didn't know the answer to that question. So she wrote this very interesting and valuable book, to find out.

*Chilton Williamson, Jr. is senior editor for books at* Chronicles.

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# The Incredible Lightness of Being Liberal

*by William R. Hawkins*

**American Power: The Rise and Decline of U.S. Globalism**
*by John Taft*
*New York: Harper & Row;*
*320 pp., $22.50*

◆

John Taft's book is a history of American foreign policy from World War I through the Vietnam War, as exemplified by the careers of prominent "liberal internationalists" who dominated the policymaking process: William Bullit, Averell Harriman, George Kennan, Chester Bowles, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., Dean Acheson, David Bruce, John Foster Dulles, Herbert Hoover, Ellsworth Bunker, Henry Stimson, and Cyrus Vance. These men represent a bipartisan group of public servants who shared an international view. Unfortunately, these views were ideologically at odds with the traditional practice of *realpolitik* required to protect and ad-



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vance the interests of a Great Power; and thus a nation whose economic, technological, and military strength relative to the rest of the world dwarfed that of the Roman and British Empires at their zenith, found itself constantly on the defensive, unable finally to turn aside even the challenge of a minor state like North Vietnam. America's "best and brightest" were not only unable effectively to use the enormous power available to them, but they were philosophically unable even to think reasonably about its proper deployment. A more accurate title for this book would be "The Negation of American Power."

John Taft has written an interesting work, but not one that breaks any new ground. Two circumstances, however, give his interpretation greater significance than it would otherwise merit. First, the project was commissioned by Michael Kinsley, editor of *The New Republic*, the journal Taft properly identifies as the home base of the internationalist liberals since the days of Woodrow Wilson; and second, Taft himself is the originator and producer of the PBS series *America's Century*, which covers this same ground.

Taft defines "internationalist liberalism" as "a fairly consistent adherence to free trade and investment, anti-imperialism, the advancement of democracy, foreign aid, arms control and multilateral institutions such as the United Nations." This doctrine, of course, did not originate with the protagonists of Taft's chronicle: it amounts, in fact, to nothing other than classical liberalism, and is prefigured (with the exception of the reference to foreign aid) in Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, written in 1795.

The two most important liberal dogmas are free trade and anti-imperialism. The first of these is part of a general belief in economic determinism: unlike exponents of *realpolitik* and mercantilism, who regard economic and political power as symbiotic, liberals wish to replace politics with economics (J.B. Say went so far as to conclude that free trade would make even ambassadors—"one of the ancient stupidities"—obsolete). While the Marshall Plan is often cited as a successful liberal policy, it was only the age-old practice of subsidizing allies against a common enemy. (Liberal failures have been of a different sort.)

In Vietnam, this kind of thinking led to the fatally flawed concept of limited war. The US would provide a shield behind which economic development and social reform would create a viable democratic society immune to subversion. The problem with this strategy is that it takes longer to create such a society than it does to lose a war. Chester Bowles thought Hanoi could be dissuaded from seeking dominion over the region if a Southeast Asian Common Market were established under a neutral development agency and with a commitment to free trade. President Johnson did offer postwar aid to Hanoi, but to no avail. The Communists simply turned the concept into a demand for reparations.

The inhibitions placed on military operations during Vietnam reflect the general liberal reluctance to employ force. Yet the nature of war and politics is, as Clausewitz observed, to compel others to do our will. Compulsion by its nature creates a situation where one group gives orders to another, who must obey or suffer the consequences. Liberals find such a relationship abhorrent and can justify it only when the highest moral principles are being served. That means that for them the dominant party can legitimately exercise its power only for the good of others, never for its own gain: a precept which effectively rules out the national interest as an acceptable motive for action.

Imperialism is one form of an international hierarchy based on power, and thus liberals are vehemently anti-imperialistic, an attitude that is closely related to what Taft identifies as their "moralistic hatred of Western racism—of white people lording it over brown people." To liberals, military intervention and gunboat diplomacy are simply further instances of compulsion based on international inequality, all of which they reject unless these are perpetuated purely for altruistic reasons (e.g., "the democratic redemption of mankind"). Yet, Vietnam is the turning point for Taft. "I began this book with some enthusiasm for what these people accomplished, or set out to accomplish, in the world arena. A closer examination of the record left me far more skeptical. . . . [I]n their zeal to promote their program against Communist challenges, they may have ended up running a US empire of a different kind."

Taft attempts to draw a distinction between internationalist liberals and what he calls "ultraliberals." Both groups, he argues, share the same goals, but the ultras, having been mugged by reality, are now ready to lock themselves in at night. "They preferred the United States to retreat into a noisy geographic isolation rather than compromise any important point on their agenda." Indeed, ultraliberals believe that "America should withdraw from the world not because of its superior virtue but because of its unique wickedness." Henry Wallace and George McGovern are obvious ultras, but many of Taft's internationalists move back and forth to blur the distinction, and of these, Averell Harriman is a prime example.

Taft's criticism of the ultraliberals may sound sweet to conservatives, but he is no friend of the right. He admits that "an administration like Reagan's became almost a necessity—and his policies towards Russia have to be seen on the whole as a success." Yet, he assails Republicans in general for having "rejected the legal and moral internationalism implied by human rights criteria, the United Nations, the International Court and the Law of the Sea," and President Reagan in particular for "Star Wars," his air raid on Libya, and intervention in Central America.

Though Taft includes a final chapter on the Reagan years, the period holds little interest for him. He makes no reference, for example, to the substantial impact made on the Reagan administration by a new wave of internationalist liberals; nor to the libertarians, who, proudly claiming the mantle of classical liberalism, won control of economic policy and entrenched free trade in the White House, despite the massive trade deficits and the expansion of foreign industrial and financial power; nor, finally, to the neoconservatives, direct descendants of those liberals who sought refuge in the GOP after losing to the ultraliberals in the Democratic Party and who are at present the major spokesmen for the foreign policy of a Republican administration. Today, globalism is in high fashion: so dominant is this sophistry



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that very little dissenting opinion is allowed in print or on the airwaves.

In the end, John Taft remains a disillusioned liberal. Like his ultraliberals, he sees the years of America's peak strength as "not a halcyon era of economic growth and the preservation of liberty—on the contrary they are a bizarre period of harsh, warmongering rigidity engendered by World War II, Korea and Vietnam."

*William R. Hawkins is research director for The South Foundation and lives in Knoxville, Tennessee.*

# Gradus Ad Parnassum

*by J.O. Tate*

**The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings**
*by David Dubal*
*New York: Summit Books; 477 pp., $40.00*

◆

How neglectful of David Dubal not to write *the* great book on the piano, especially considering what a fine position he was in to do so! So let's get the unpleasantness out of the way first, before reviewing the merits of his study.

*The Art of the Piano* is internally divided against itself in more than one way. It's halved between "The Pianists" and "The Piano Literature With Lists of Exceptional Recordings," while the second half is itself halved by a subdivision that segregates major from minor composers. In addition, the halves aren't attuned to each other—or perhaps I should say that too often the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing. When Grieg's Concerto in A minor is cited, the recording by Leon Fleisher and the Cleveland Orchestra, George Szell conducting, is mentioned, as it must be. But the flip side of that disc—an even better reading of the Schumann Concerto in the same key by the same artists—doesn't show up as it unquestionably should under "Schumann." Neither is one of Alfred Cortot's recordings of Schumann's concerto cited, though back in the first half we find (under "Cortot") four versions as well as three different *Carnavals*, none cited back again in the second half under "Schumann."

This sort of thing happens too often. Edwin Fischer's recording of Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue is rightly singled out for praise under that pianist's name, but when we look at the entry for that piece under "Bach," Fischer isn't there. Similarly, Dubal sees Wilhelm Backhaus in the right perspective: "his readings of the Schumann Fantasy, the Brahms *Paganini* Variations, and history's first set of the Chopin Twenty-four Etudes, peerless in execution, were 'musts' in any collection." They still are. But they aren't listed where they belong in the second half of Dubal's encyclopedia.

Though David Dubal has the knowledge and authority necessary for the task he undertook, he has not delivered the finished work he is capable of doing. The decision to combine his survey of pianism with a survey of the piano literature was a bad one, a refusal to choose, and the decision to give the book the form of three runs through the alphabet was disastrous, the result too often seeming to be a jog through Dubal's card file. In the end, dependence on the arbitrariness of the alphabet appears to equate the mediocre with the magnificent, the living with the dead, the documented with the legendary, and the satyr with Hyperion. One sentence on Hans Graf lives next door to five pages on Glenn Gould; two sentences on Helen Hopekirk are juxtaposed with nine pages on Vladimir Horowitz.

In other words, *The Art of the Piano* doesn't eclipse Harold C. Schonberg's *The Great Pianists*, though it could have—and, I think, should have. Yet having come to bury Dubal, I will remain to praise him. His book on the piano, in spite of some shaky writing, says some essential things about the great players of the instrument, and, even more, it communicates much of the love, the passion, the joy that great performances can bring the listener. Dubal *cares*. He knows what he's talking about, and when he gets wound up, he doesn't hold back.

Let's get down to cases: Dubal's treatment of Wilhelm Backhaus is at least fair—compare to it Schonberg's neglect of that major artist. Dubal is right about Simon Barère; for him Glenn Gould is, as an artist, no problematical figure; his account of Claudio Arrau is just; he makes fine and valid distinctions about Rudolf Serkin. I can't argue with what he says about Lazar Berman, or William Masselos, or Vladimir de Pachman, or Josef Lhévinne, or Mischa Levitzki, or Earl Wild—but why did he omit Raoul Koczalski altogether?

A fine pianist himself, Dubal likes pianists and he understands their problems. He reacts strongly to strong personalities, and vividly to colorful and stylish execution. The best thing about his book is its kinetic quality—he makes you want to buy tickets to recitals and copies of great recordings. Again and again, he cites *the* great recording, the essential interpretation, the great name, the one to have—legally if possible, you understand.

What Dubal has to say about Ignaz Friedman's magnificent Chopin Mazurkas and his uncanny rendition of the Chopin Nocturne in E-flat, Op. 55, No. 2 is a testimony not only to Friedman but also to Dubal's own sensibility and apprehension. His reservations about Josef Hofmann—not ones I share—say perhaps as much about Dubal's interior conflicts as they do about Hofmann. Dubal's strictures on Hofmann are his most controversial judgments and show a deep ambivalence toward his subject. With Dubal, Hofmann touches a nerve.

My favorite pages here, though, are the ones devoted to Alfred Cortot and his recorded legacy. Not only the recordings Dubal glosses but recent remasterings of Cortot's early Victors and later EMI test pressings must convince the listener of Cortot's greatness. David Dubal's impassioned responses to the music left by Alfred Cortot do justice to the artist, and well become the author. His accounts of the art of Artur Schnabel, Artur Rubinstein, and Vladimir Horowitz also demonstrate why music lovers and piano buffs will want to consult this book often. In spite of structural flaws and some overripe phrases, David Dubal's *The Art of the Piano* is a book for piano-lovers in large part because the author loves the piano.

*J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.*



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# Letter From the Lower Right

*by John Shelton Reed*

## The Last Round-up

◆

*Chronicles* has a leisurely—almost Southern—production schedule, which means that you should be reading this just about the time the dogwoods blossom. I'm writing it, though, as 1989 draws to a close, ending a decade that, all things considered, could have been worse. But lest we wax too smug about the success of voodoo economics and Star Wars diplomacy, let's consider some recent, revolting developments on the cultural front.

The big news in the art world last year was the attempt by my state's senior senator to impose fascistic thought control. This was the sort of language generally used to describe Senator Helms's proposal, inspired by a couple of particularly raunchy examples, that taxpayers' money not be used to support obscene art. As it happens, when I was in DC last August, I snuck off (in the interests of science) to see Mr. Mapplethorpe's notorious photographs—and I wish I hadn't. When Jimmy Walker said that no girl was ever ruined by a book he revealed his contempt for books, if not for girls. If a picture's worth a thousand words, these photographs add up to a book that could sure bend an impressionable young mind out of shape. Even I picked up a few images that will be with me for a while.

In fact, I think Jesse wimped out on this one. He just wanted to deny funds to this exhibit; me, I'd shut it down and put an armed guard on the door. Thirty years ago these photographs could not have been publicly displayed in any American community, and I don't think our country's a better place now because they can be.

When it comes to state support for sadomasochistic homosexual art, give me Georgia State Representative Billy Randall's bill to make Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" the official rock and roll song of Georgia. (One clause of the bill reads: "WHEREAS, a wop bop a loo bop ba lop bam boom." Representative Randall is 45, a dangerous age.) Last I heard the bill had stalled, which is a shame: Georgia ought somehow to honor the best-known poet from Macon since Sidney Lanier.

The other big First Amendment news last year, of course, was the decision by the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals that pre-game prayers at Douglas County (Georgia) High School football games violated the separation of church and state. *Time* reported that fans in Sylacauga, Alabama, responded with mass chanting of the Lord's Prayer at the start of their team's first three games (which the team won). In Escambia County, Florida, preachers with bullhorns led the crowd in prayer. And in Chatsworth, Georgia, fans turned their radios to full volume as the local station broadcast a prayer. "There's more than one way to skin a cat," the station manager told *Time*.

In Montgomery, pre-game prayers at the municipal stadium were led by the Honorable Emory Folmar himself. Mr. Folmar, mayor of Montgomery, is a colorful character known to many of his subjects as "the Mayortollah." About his habit of traveling armed, I once heard this joke:

> Q: Why does Emory carry a nickle-plated revolver?
> A: So it won't rust in the shower.

Down the road at Tuscaloosa, campus police at 'Bama are also ready for whatever comes along—for now. A study commission has concluded, however, that their purchase of automatic shotguns and semiautomatic pistols was "unnecessary and unwarranted." According to the student newspaper, *The Crimson White*, the report also criticized the campus police for setting up a SWAT unit. This kind of negativity would never have been tolerated when the Bear was running things.

But that's the Second Amendment. Getting back to the First, maybe we can forgive the ACLU a few excesses for its defense of the right of junior high students in Durham, North Carolina, to wear rebel flag patches on their jackets. Such patches were banned by administrative edict, you may recall, as "likely to cause trouble." Last fall, after a successful suit in district court, the flags were readmitted to the classroom. So far they've caused no trouble.

That can't be said for what Bridget Fonda did with the same flag in *Shag* or for the flag bikini worn by another character in that movie, which desecration elicited spirited protest from at least one member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Personally, I thought the bikini was rather fetching, but if we have to do something about it, I have an idea. I read that a Tennessee legislator has introduced a bill that would levy a fine of $1.00 on anyone convicted of assaulting someone who is burning an American flag. Well, let's punish ripping off a Confederate flag bikini with about the same severity. (Incidentally, these Tennesseans take the flag-burning threat seriously. Servpro Industries, of Gallatin, offers to fireproof your flag to three thousand degrees.)

Of course the young Miss Fonda's indiscretion is nothing compared to her aunt's. Some folks down here are still

## LIBERAL ARTS

### A WITNESS FOR NORIEGA'S DEFENSE

Elliott Abrams, as Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, in an April 21, 1986, testimony before the Committee on Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs: "The subcommittee has expressed concern regarding narcotics in Panama. In the matters of controlling the production of trafficking in drugs or precursor chemicals, we have received excellent cooperation from Panama's civil and law enforcement authorities."



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not ready to forgive old Jane her trip to Hanoi. The catalog of D&G, a Columbus, Georgia, dealer in "militaria," offers bumper stickers that read "Boycott Jane Fonda, American Traitor Bitch" and—I'm sorry, folks, but this was America in 1989—something called "Hanoi Jane urinal targets." Reminds me of the Mapplethorpe exhibit.

Here in Chapel Hill, home of vasectomized beavers, another blow was struck against speciesism late last year when buffalo-rights advocates, calling Buffalo Bill a "butcher," got a sculpture of his head and those of three buffalo removed from the lobby of the post office. The work had been lent by a local sculptor in connection with the issue of a new 15-cent buffalo stamp. Had the artist been receiving federal funds, perhaps someone would have spoken out for her First Amendment rights.

I hope you don't get the impression, incidentally, that Chapel Hill trendinistas are the only Southerners who care about animal rights. I mean, you can't top the undated clipping from the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* that recently trickled in, headlined "Insult to Dog Linked to Slaying." *That's* concern. It seems that Mr. Jerry Wade, 28, of Calhoun City, Mississippi, made rude remarks about a dog belonging to Mr. David Powell of Derma—specifically, Wade said he "could get a [expletive deleted] off the street to whup [Powell's] dog"—whereupon Mr. Powell shot Mr. Wade once (but that was enough) with a .38 he happened to be carrying.

And lower down the evolutionary scale, in Matthews, North Carolina—no, let me start that over. In Matthews, North Carolina, crustacean rights were vindicated when a man who had paid $270 for a 21.4-pound Maine lobster, estimated to be 147 years old, freed the critter. When television coverage evoked a flood of phone calls asking for clemency, the buyer (according to the AP) reportedly said "Oh, to heck with it." "Lobzilla," as the Large One had come to be called, was shipped back to Maine at the expense of a Washington-based animal-rights group, there to enjoy his old age back in the deep.

Returning to the civil liberties of putatively human beings, the Invisible Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan may be taking the North Carolina Department of Transportation to court. North Carolina has what is called the Adopt-a-Highway program: if your club or company agrees to clean up litter from a stretch of roadside, a sign goes up attesting to your public spirit. More than 4,500 groups now clean up about 10,000 miles of road, but the Department of Transportation drew the line when the KKK applied. One reason the Knights were not allowed to be points of light, it was said, was that people would deliberately throw trash on the highway to make work for them. (As far as I know, no one suggested that the Invisible Empire could have an invisible sign.) To show the kluxers that there was nothing personal about its decision, the transportation department also turned down applications from a Chapel Hill rock band called the Sex Police and a Raleigh lingerie shop called the Bra Patch. (Maybe the pun only works if you have a Southern accent.) Anyway, stay tuned. As I said, this one's probably headed for the courts.

Speaking of things that shouldn't burden our legal system, an associate professor of education at the university where I teach surveyed female graduate students on their experience with "sexual harassment" and found what she interpreted as appalling levels of ignorance. According to the newspaper account of her findings, fewer than 3 percent of these women thought they had been sexually harassed, even though 30 percent had been "subjected to suggestive stories told in their presence" and 26 percent had heard "sexist remarks regarding either their behavior or their career options." Apparently these women simply didn't realize that this stuff is sexual harassment, not just boorish, ill-bred behavior. For that matter, neither did I.

Nor did residents of a women's dormitory at Western Kentucky University, it seems. Male students offered them a "tuck-in" service that included milk and cookies and a bedtime story—in fact, a choice of stories, traditional or "hot" (clipped from *Penthouse Forum*)—and what do you think they chose? Yep, every single one.

Meanwhile, back in Chapel Hill, the "Lewis Streak," in which young men from Lewis dormitory once a year strut their stuff for the residents of several nearby women's dorms, came under fire. According to the *Daily Tar Heel*, "University officials fear it undermines efforts to stop date rape and sexual harassment on campus." The dean of students was quoted as saying this particular act of self-expression "is no longer acceptable in this campus community," and that it presents "much potential for personal injury as well as for the infliction of emotional distress."

OK, guys, here's my plan. You take *photographs*, see, and blow them up to life size. Then you, like, *carry* them past the dorms, and if anybody objects, it's *art*.

* * *

By the way, I apologize for calling the staff of *Southern Exposure* "a somber band of aging New Leftists." I am reliably informed that the magazine is now staffed by a somber band of juvenile New Leftists.

*John Shelton Reed writes from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and has had it up to here with whining artists.*

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# Letter From Brazil

*by Geoffrey Wagner*

## No Pedestrians

◆

The last time I visited Brazil I arrived on a Ladeco flight from Santiago clutching a copy of Chile's best newspaper, *El Mercurio*, wherein I was much impressed by an exclusive from the ever-erudite pen of Thomas Molnar. His article dealt with the architectural rape of modern cities, of which Pei's monstrosity in front of the Louvre is one example, and it applied closely to South America, alongside the more publicized pillaging of that continent's natural life.

Everywhere one travels there today the eye is depressed by the sudden urbanization, the eradication of history via hideous high-rise buildings of an anonymity more relevant to insects than human beings. One after another the old colonial centers are being squeezed out in the interests of soulless small apartments, geared to the couch-potato life of washing machines and TV. In some of these cities (Brasilia, São Paulo, La Paz, Caracas, even Salvador-Bahia, Brazil's former capital) the pedestrian is an anachronism. It is not merely unpleasant, but dangerous, to amble about. Quito and (to a degree) Asunción may have retained some of the dignity of their past in the face of this industrialization, and Buenos Aires is still a city you can stroll in, with pedestrian malls like the famous Florida, but Lima and Rio are swamped with appallingly impoverished sectors, some still without light and water, all crying out to city fathers for translation into high-rise horrors. Rio, whose glorious setting redeems its tourist facade, actually offers sight-seeing tours of its shantytown slums (*favelas*). To its honor, Quito is alone in sequestering its old town, grouped with glorious baroque churches about its Independence Square, well to one side of its modern city with busy shopping centers, or *centros commerciales*.

A little more than halfway up the Atlantic coast from Rio to Recife, Bahia's hotels are jammed with tourist groups. A small relic of the old town, with its colonial churches and convents, one made into a graceful hotel, is walkable, but almost anywhere you want to go involves a (cheap, honest, polite) taxi ride, and up here Brazilians don't speak Spanish. The São Paulo church is a glory of gilt baroque, while the chapel of Nossa Senhora do Bonfim hangs from the ceiling of its atrium the limbs and heads (some embellished with bloody wounds) of the miraculously cured. As the same sculptor seems to have been responsible for these it is like being in some grisly orthopedic operation room. But the faith is there.

Tasteful folkloric handicrafts are not, despite the hype of brochures and tour books. The Modelo market by the piers has floors of wood carvings and "peasanty" offerings in the style of a rather crummy South American Woolworth's. This prompts the thought that tasteful indigenous artifacts arise in those regions — Mexico, Peru, to some extent Ecuador — where Indian art has poured into and borrowed from and even enriched the Catholic; though Brazil has its celebrated Amazon Indians, they do not seem to have found any vital channel into high art.

For tourism, least of all group tourism, does not enhance aesthetic confidence, and seaside Brazil is first and foremost a resort today. Nobody wears anything much. Informality is such that I twice found myself chauffered by girl taxi-drivers in short-shorts. Along the kilometers of beaches of Rio and Bahia the string bikini puts what Shakespeare termed "the afternoon of the body" on display. Satin-sheened rolls of sulcal skin roast on the poolside spits while, as for their jeans, the local teens must triple-sew them at the seams, unless they put them on with a spray-gun.

The currency continues to collapse. The attempt to match the new cruzado with the dollar, obliging you to cancel three zeroes on each note, does not seem to have worked. The customary dollar panic was on when I last arrived, shingles held up in the airport advertising advantageous change rates for anyone possessing greenbacks, while my hotel, the Meridien, had a rate for anyone paying in dollar bills that was nearly half what would have been listed on a credit card check. I cashed $100 on arriving, to find it worth $60 the next morning, and $20 a few days later. I left with a handful of bills which I simply tore up and put in the garbage back in New York.

But perhaps the acme of local contempt for their own currency came when I watched some of the magnificent *capoeira* dancing outside the Modelo market one Saturday noon. This is a truly remarkable mixture of acrobatic kung-fu and break-dancing, said to have come down from the African slaves who were denied any martial arts or arms and who substituted the *capoeira* to keep their overseers quiet. Today these dancers always attract crowds and invariably pass around the hat at intervals. I contributed what I thought I had translated as an appropriate cruzado bill, only to have the dancer decline it.

Finally, South America stands badly in need of an open-eyed guidebook. In the last listing of best hotels in the world, in *Investors Chronicle*, there was not a single hotel in the whole of South America within the first fifty (Bangkok's Oriental invariably wins, thanks to its army of servants). Fodor and Myra Waldo are either hopelessly out-of-date (not always their fault on the peripatetic restaurant scene), or ludicrously sentimental: of Bahia the latter writes, "As the dark-skinned men load heavy goods, the cheerful Negresses sell anything and everything, happy voices are raised, often in song . . . " Fodor specializes in comments so generalized they are undatable since they could apply anywhere. There is the *South American Handbook* (to which I confess to having contributed details). It is certainly the most comprehensive, so long as you have a microscope handy with which to read the print, but it is leveled at the British (who can't get to the Argentine anyway) and apparently more directly at the indigent British backpacker. A typical entry might go something like this: "The five-day bus ride to Santa Inertia (bring your own seat) costs 72 cents. At Los Pueblos you can rent a room with kitchen facilities at Mrs. Lopez' over the abattoir for $1.50 a night (bring your own mattress and mosquito repellent)." The continent needs its Michelin.

*Geoffrey Wagner's latest book is* Red Calypso *(Regnery Gateway), a study of Cuban adventurism in the Caribbean.*



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THE ACADEMY

Jeanne Berg

# The Ignorance of the Doctors

*by George Watson*

Montaigne in his *Essays* called it *ignorance doctorale* (I.54). Four hundred years later an American journalist called it "educated incompetence." It means the sort of non-knowledge, or anti-knowledge, that can follow upon higher learning, especially when theorizing about politics, morality, and the arts.

That, in the first age of mass higher education in human history, is a large matter, and far larger than Montaigne could ever have guessed. It has nothing to do with taking degrees, and my target here is not the Ph.D. industry. It is too late for that. In 1903, in a Harvard journal, William James inveighed against it in an article called "The Ph.D. Octopus," and for eighty years and more the American nation has chosen to ignore his advice. The octopus won, in fact, as you would expect any octopus to do in single combat with a philosopher. My concern here is wider than that. It is with the sort of mistake you would have to be learned to make, though it might be enough to have talked to someone who had read a book or taken a course. It is much harder to forgive than what Montaigne called ABC ignorance, which is merely childish, innocent, and easily cured. With the ignorance of the doctors someone has been to a lot of trouble to get it wrong.

Let me give you a simple example. In November 1989, days or weeks after the tumbling down of the Berlin Wall and the democratic revolution in Czechoslovakia, the Communist Party of Great Britain held what may be its last annual general meeting—its last, because the national membership has fallen to some 7,000-odd loyalists, and after the news from Berlin and Prague its atmosphere was understandably reminiscent of a wake. "Stalinism is dead," one of its leaders announced from the platform, "and Leninism has had its day." That was the voice of Martin Jacques, editor of the monthly magazine *Marxism Today* and reputedly a lively editor and a man of some education and intelligence. He became a Marxist in the mid-1960's. In other words, it has taken him a quarter of a century to realize that the philosophy of a German sage born a year before Queen Victoria does not work for the political societies of Europe, East or West, in the last years of the 20th century.

One is inclined to say that it would be more surprising if it did. All the principal views of Marx and Engels, after all, were formed before 1850. They were early Victorians. Early Victorian medicines are not much used on the human body, early Victorian literary views are not much taught in schools and colleges, except as curiosities, and engineers do not employ early Victorian techniques, on the whole, when they build buildings and bridges. What is surprising about Mr. Jacques and his 7,000 fellow members is that they should be so surprised. Perhaps *Marxism Today* will now be renamed *Marxism Yesterday*. Perhaps the Communist Party of Great Britain, which has not managed to elect a single member to the House of Commons since 1945 (they still have one in the House of Lords), will now call itself the Party That Got It Wrong.

But what was above all breathtaking about Mr. Jacques's platform speech was a passing remark he made about China. Chinese Communism, he remarked sadly, "turned authoritarian" in June 1989 when the People's Army fired on demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. That "turned" shows what the ignorance of the doctors can be like. What illiterate peasant in China since 1949, or for that matter before 1949, ever doubted that his rulers were authoritarian? He might not know much about the 25-30 million said to have been killed by Mao and his followers in the first years of their rule—perhaps treble the Nazi total—or about the uncounted thousands who were killed in Mao's last purge during the Cultural Revolution of 1967-76. But he did not doubt the general character of his rulers. The notion that the Beijing government only turned authoritarian in June 1989 is enough to make a cat laugh. How educated would you have to be to believe that?

Marxism is an Ism, and some Isms, like some sacred names, achieve a status beyond doubt. Consider colonialism. Any ordinary citizen of colonies like Hong Kong or Gibraltar knows something about how well or badly he is administered, and he probably has views about joining or not joining China or Spain. But once you call such territories colonies, and once someone with or without a doctorate invents the term colonialism, it starts to look as if all the cases might be subject to a single moral judgment. If colonialism is wicked, then it must be wrong that Gibraltar or Hong Kong should be colonies. If capitalism is wicked, as Marx said before our grandparents were born, then any instance of capitalism must be wicked, too.



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The point has nothing to do with the right or left, and easy conceptualizing does not belong to any single place in the political spectrum. A highly conservative colleague, when he heard I was writing a book to prove the objectivity of literary judgments to be called *The Certainty of Literature*, remarked scornfully: "You believe there are absolute standards out there that everybody should submit to." The notion that one could judge, and judge objectively, without having standards, let alone universally accepted standards, was so foreign to his mind that it was a possibility he could not even entertain. And yet on the numerous occasions we had examined together it did not occur to him to ask what our standards were, or whether we could agree about them or not; still less did he doubt that the judgments we made as examiners were objective judgments. It would not have occurred to him, in short, as he theorized confidently about the nature of critical values, to consider any instance in which he had made a judgment of value himself.

There is, as it happens, a philosophical name for nonsense of this order, and it is foundationalism.

Foundationalism is the belief or assumption that all certain knowledge depends on stated and agreed foundations, and that without such foundations one can only doubt. People who demand verbal definitions and criteria —who has not met them in seminars? —are usually victims of the foundationalist fallacy; so are those who, inside universities or outside them, call for a theoretical basis to moral or critical knowledge. Marxism, in its heyday, was a classic instance of foundationalism and its foundation was that all history is a history of class struggle. So was anti-colonialism.

There is a good deal the matter with the foundationalist case, and it may be convenient to put some of it in numbered order.

1. If all claims to truth, to count as knowledge, need stated and agreed foundations, then so does that claim. It is, after all, of enormous scope —wider even than morality, politics, and the arts. But any attempt to provide such a foundation would have to be imagined as an exception to itself: otherwise one would have to ask what *its* foundation was, and what (in its turn) was its foundation. There is a difficult Oriental myth that the world rests on the back of an elephant standing on a tortoise. But what is the tortoise standing on?

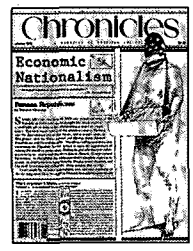
2. It cannot be reasonable to demand that all foundations should be stated. Much that is known, after all, cannot be stated at all: the taste of food and wine, for instance, or the intimacies of friendship and love. One can know without being able to say what one knows and, as phrases like "unconscious desire" suggest, without even being aware that one knows. Anyone who confuses knowledge with being able to give an account, then, is committing a profoundly elementary mistake, and one that runs counter to the daily and hourly experience of living.

3. The demand for *agreed* foundations —"What are our criteria?" —is even less reasonable. Why should agreement be needed, whether willing or enforced in order to be certain? The earth is certainly round, however many flat-earthers there may happen to be; and murder, not to say extermination, is wrong, whatever Nazis or Maoists may say or do. That there are disagreements, then, in moral, political, and artistic judgments is no sufficient reason to say that such judgments are uncertain, subjective, or merely personal. We do not need agreement in order to have certain knowledge: silly people say silly things.

4. In *A Grammar of Assent* (1870), John Henry Newman remarked that, just as there is invincible ignorance, so there is invincible knowledge: truths that are certain without using words, without definitions and criteria, without agreement, without debate. Nearly a century later Wittgenstein raised a similar point in his notes *On Certainty* (1969) when he remarked that there


## GREAT TOPICS, GREAT ISSUES

**The Tongues of Men and of Angels** – December 1989 – Donald Davidson on the lyric of tradition, R.S. Gwynn on "poetry you can read," J.O. Tate on Robert Parker, and a short story by William Mills. Plus John Lofton's interview with Allen Ginsberg, Chilton Williamson's review of the new Faulkner biography, William Murchison on the feminization of the military, and Wayne Lutton on the Chinese mafia in America.

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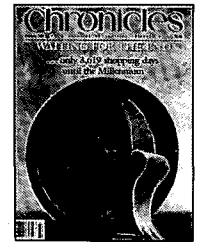


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are matters one knows for certain without having to verify. "Why do I not satisfy myself that I have two feet when I want to get up from a chair?" Looking, after all, would be useless: if one failed to see one's feet one doubts one's eyes. The same point is contained, more elaborately, in the old joke about "Can you play the violin?" Anyone who answers "I don't know: I've never tried" can get an easy laugh because anyone can see that you do not have to try in order to know that you can't.

The ignorance of the doctors, for all that, goes on, and it will survive the Beijing massacre of June 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall five months later. It will survive, as doctoral ignorances do, by looking sophisticated. For example, in a recent philosophical treatise, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989), Richard Rorty has shown himself a classic foundationalist. Quoting George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a book that appeared in the same year as Mao's seizure of power in China—"Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two equals four"—Rorty concludes that there is no sufficient ground for any arithmetical certainty. It does not occur to him that a truth might be ungrounded and still certain. The most he can offer, in exchange, is an uncomfortable way station on the path to knowledge:

> It does not matter whether "two plus two equals four" is true. All that matters is that if you believe it, you can say it without getting hurt. If we take care of freedom, truth can look after itself.

But Orwell's point, and a far sharper one, was that to abandon all claims to truth is to abandon freedom, too. The phrase about leaving truth to look after itself comes sadly from a philosopher. To admit it is to embrace despair. But then it is the search for foundations that has led to that despair, and the next task is to persuade educated mankind that the search should never have been begun. "He who does not know truth at first sight," the poet Blake once wrote in the margin of one of his books, "is unworthy of her notice." A child, as Wittgenstein remarked, does not *believe* in the two-times table when he learns it at school: he sees that it is so. The critical mind, in our times, has become deeply, tragically conscious that it has not yet found the theoretical foundation to judgment. Now it needs to be persuaded that it has found none because there is none to be found.

*George Watson, a fellow in English at St. John's College, Cambridge, is the author of* The Certainty of Literature *and* British Literature Since 1945 *(St. Martin's Press).*

## MORES

Jeanne Berg

# Assaulting the Compact

***by Janet Scott Barlow***

One afternoon last winter, I was trying on jackets in a department store dressing room when a woman with a child entered the compartment next to mine. The child was cranky; the woman was chatty. Choosing hope over reality, as mothers in chancy situations often do, the woman said, "Be a good boy, Jeffrey. This'll only take Mommy a minute."

From the size of his shoes, which were visible beneath the partition that separated us, I guessed Jeffrey to be about three years old. And based on the sounds he was emitting—snuffles, whines, and great wounded moans—it was obvious that Jeffrey was a kid heading straight for the edge. He carried on loudly for a while, his trapped and miserable body occasionally collapsing with a thud against our shared partition. Then suddenly, all was quiet. Almost as suddenly, I was aware of something at my feet. I looked down and there was Jeffrey, flat on his back, staring up at me impassively, a little slug in a hooded parka. It was a sight that might have been captivating if the circumstances hadn't made it completely undesirable. I had nothing against Jeffrey—in fact, I sympathized with his plight—but I did not wish to share this moment with him.

Figuring his mother would promptly remove him—I mean, how could she miss what he was doing?—I gazed down at Jeffrey and waited. I waited for what seemed like a long time. When Jeffrey's mother finally chose to address the matter at hand, her words were to her son but her message was for me. With sing-song confidence she said, "Oh, Jeffrey! That lady doesn't think you're funny." Which meant that I was supposed to think Jeffrey was funny. She was finessing Jeffrey; she was finessing the whole situation, for her benefit (after all, Jeffrey finally was pacified), at my expense, with a brazen lack of ambivalence.

Until that moment, I had felt sympathy not only for Jeffrey but for his mother. If it's tough to be a kid dragged around on a shopping expedition, it's also tough to shop while dragging around kids. (My strongest feelings, however, were for Jeffrey. Mothers usually have a choice in those deals. Kids don't.) But all sympathy left me when I realized she was exploiting the great unspoken compact among parents, that shared understanding of the job that allows them to view each other with a little charity and give each other a little room. Not only was Jeffrey's mother willing for me, an innocent stranger, to serve as Jeffrey's distraction, she expected my cooperation. What's more, I was supposed to think the whole thing was sort of cute. Worst of all, she was willing, for her own convenience, to sacrifice what I can only think of as her child's reputation as a kid by in effect volunteering him as a pain in the neck.

Needless to say, the situation was not cute (although from what I saw of him, Jeffrey was), and since his mother had left both Jeffrey and me to our own devices, I said firmly to the slug at my feet, "Good-bye, Jeffrey." Without getting off his back, without uttering a word or taking his eyes from mine, Jeffrey slowly inched his way back under



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the partition—then promptly took up where he had left off, wailing his toddler grief. At that point, I found one more reason to resent Jeffrey's mother. She had provoked in me a petty thought: *Serves you right, Mommy.*

I dwell on this episode because it seems to me a microcosm of current parental attitudes and behavior. There were three problems in that dressing room. There was Jeffrey's problem, which was that he was three years old, stuffed into a snowsuit, and trapped in a cubicle. There was my problem, which was that I wanted to try on clothes without the company of children I had never seen before. And there was Jeffrey's mother's problem, which was that she wanted to do what she wanted to do and feel like a nice mommy in the bargain.

The question was one of problem ownership. Who owned those problems? It wasn't Jeffrey, because you can ask many things of a three-year-old, but passive endurance of overheated physical imprisonment isn't one of them. And it certainly wasn't me. That leaves Jeffrey's mother, whose burden, to my way of thinking, was to solve Jeffrey's problem and mine, which she could have done by simply *not* doing what she wanted to do and taking poor Jeffrey home. Not doing what you want to do: by all evidence, this is considered radical thinking by many modern parents.

I am convinced that the impulse which allowed Jeffrey's mother to expect my complicity in her problem holds the seed of the attitude that eventually leads parents to say, "Her teacher doesn't understand her" when their daughter fails in school, and "Oh, he's just being a kid" when their son vandalizes someone's mailbox. (On another level, it may even hold the seed of the confusion between something like the need for daycare and the right to daycare.) The impulse is an admission of both helplessness and self-centeredness, an expression of the desire to have someone, anyone, available to share the burden of parental duty and the blame of parental failure, failure being all but inevitable of course when parents insist on the illusion that they can conveniently skip the small stuff without in any way jeopardizing the big stuff.

Lazy, self-deluded parents are nothing new. What is new, at least to me, is the conceit of parental mastery that now accompanies the laziness and self-delusion. I am referring to the mothers and fathers who create a great show of their parental investment, those who make themselves (and their children) sitting ducks by claiming publicly the badge of Really Terrific Parents. These people are everywhere.

You can find Really Terrific Dads in the library on Saturday mornings, laughing indulgently (*Ah, kids!*) when their pretty little five-year-old daughters suddenly shout something like, "You big dumb stupid Daddy!" The laugh is meant to hide the fact that these men are secretly terrified of their children and haven't the faintest idea what to do, what to *think*, about being called "big dumb stupid Daddy." The game here is to avoid the need for action by not acknowledging it.

And there are always a couple of Really Terrific Moms in any bookstore, women who entertain their maternal vanity by imposing their children's intelligence on fellow browsers. ("And what's *this* word, sweetheart? That's right, it's *environment*.") They are the mothers who talk to their children as if they aren't quite acquainted with them; and theirs are the kids I always think of as vaguely deprived. These children seem to have everything except whatever counts as cheap thrills in the world of preschoolers. They invariably head straight for Dr. Seuss or the inexpensive and gaudy Sesame Street books or something with Pee-wee Herman on the cover. And their mothers invariably try to steer them toward some lavish award winner, a volume illustrated all in matte gray and mauve, a book in which A Child Just Like You discovers, metaphorically, the importance of the food chain or some such thing.

On any given evening you can find the whole Really Terrific Family gathered in a restaurant somewhere. No, they aren't those folks over there, the ones expeditiously finishing their meal and packing up because their baby is determined to create a ruckus. I'm talking about the people behind you, the ones who are doing what they want to do while smiling adoringly at their fed-up three-year-old, who is doing what *he* wants to do, which is to pass the time by simultaneously kicking the back of your booth and hanging over your shoulder while you eat.

If you happen to be a new parent and you find yourself the recipient of unsolicited advice on what *always* to do or *never* to do in bringing up your baby, chances are the advice is coming from Really Terrific Parents, and never mind that their kid was the one yelling "big dumb stupid Daddy" in the library.

Or maybe the discussion is about teenagers and the subject is drugs and alcohol. If the couple across from you patiently explain that they provide beer for their son's parties because "it's a good way to keep an eye on him, and besides, beer is no big deal—except when he's in training, of course," you are definitely in the company of Really Terrific Parents, a pair working in concert, at full tilt. And don't let it bother you, because it isn't likely to bother them, when you find out their son is the kid who keeps flattening your mailbox.

I don't like Really Terrific Parents. I think they are wrongheaded and silly, and I believe they're in for trouble. And I am appalled by mothers and fathers who won't do what is necessary to protect their children from needlessly appearing (in some cases, *being*) unlikable. And that's my point: I'm all angry and appalled and grumpy and negative. I am paying a price for being forced into judgment when I would prefer to withhold judgment, at least a little. Some unnamed comfort is disappearing. The great unspoken compact—the closest thing to a golden rule the world of parenthood has—is being exploited into extinction by legions of Really Terrific Parents. They offend not by mistaking indulgence for patience and blather for discipline (that offense is against their children), but by turning this process of parental capitulation into a self-satisfied public performance. It's okay, I guess, if people want to feel smug about their parental skills when no one's looking. But it is bad form to feel that way openly. And it is a direct assault on the compact to flaunt your smugness while your child is calling you names in public or sprawled at the feet of some stranger in a department store dressing room.

*Janet Scott Barlow writes from Cincinnati.*



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Jeanne Berg

# Grandma's Appointment in Samara

*by John Chodes*

When my grandmother was 89 she became a mild celebrity as a painter. Another Grandma Moses. Only better, at least I thought so. She began painting in her late 60's, after her husband died, to fill the void and loneliness. Then, quite unexpectedly, two famous artists stumbled upon her work while she was exhibiting at the outdoor Greenwich Village Art Show. Both men bought her paintings and hung them on their studio walls, and suddenly the art community was asking about this old lady who paints like Marc Chagall and who had never taken a lesson in her life.

At this time I was a fledgling writer. I saw in the stir an opportunity to write an article on Grandma Lottie and so break into print, and she agreed to do it. There was also the other benefit, that I would learn about sides of her I never knew. And that was important—because time was running out.

She had always been just "Grandma," making chicken soup and alternating between Yiddish, which I did not understand, and a heavily accented English. She would kiss me, even as an adult, the way that peasants do, grabbing my face in her big meaty hands and pressing my whole head to her lips. The smacking sound made my ears ring. That was unmistakable affection.

Grandma Lottie lived in a fifth floor walk-up in the Bronx, and it was that long climb that kept her young. When I was a kid her neighborhood had been respectable and Jewish. But time and history moved on, and now the area was a dilapidated, partly burned-out ghetto. The halls were filled with debris, stink, graffiti, and noise.

I knocked. She answered the door. This was no sweet, white-haired, frail granny. This was an old lioness. Lottie looked more like Gertrude Stein; short and stocky with shaggy, close-cropped hair set above that deeply wrinkled peasant's face.

I came in with my tape recorder and camera, to capture her words and the image of her paintings, which covered the walls from floor to ceiling. Her output was amazing, considering her age when she began.

The paintings were like her face; craggy and wild. A still-life of a bowl of fruit was created from at least a half-inch of built-up paint, layer-on-layer to evoke the textures and shimmering shapes. Even such a contemplative subject had van Gogh's freneticism.

Lottie told a story with every canvas. Since she was self-taught, no one had told her that it was impossible to convey a long narrative with a single painting. One canvas was divided into four sections and told the story of a Puerto Rican neighbor's family history. To explain it does not reveal the impact; seeing it was like viewing a tapestry. It was childlike but very effective.

I turned on my tape recorder. "Okay, Grandma, let's start. Tell me, how did you begin painting? What are your favorite subjects? What techniques do you use? You know, that kind of thing." Admittedly, it was not very imaginative, but at least it was a way to warm her up.

"No!" She said defiantly. "If they want to know my paintings, they've got to know Lottie!"

"But Grandma, I know your story. I can fill it in."

"Johnny-cakes," (that was her pet name for me) "you think you do. I put my whole life in each picture. You want to write. Then you've got to know. Look at this one."

Lottie took down one of her biggest canvases. I set up my camera. This painting was a jumble of events and figures that I could not follow. It had wild, unreal colors and everything was screaming for my attention simultaneously. I did not know where to look first to find the beginning of the story.

"Here. We start." Lottie pointed to a lower corner. "See? I am 14. It is a long, dusty, thirsty road from my home town of Jzerovenah."

"Where is that, Grandma?"

"Where else but Austro-Hungary? I am heading for Vienna, the jewel of Europe."

Grandma's words had a sing-song quality as if she had repeated this story over and over to herself as she painted. It was a magical dialogue to bring the oil-based characters to life. And she was not speaking one word of Yiddish. It was obvious she wanted me to know that she could hold a conversation entirely in English.

"I walked all four days." Her fingers moved to another portion of the painting, to a young girl and an older woman figure. "I was just like my mother, full of ambition. As I trudged along, I remember how she said 'Go to Vienna. There you have a chance to marry an officer, even a nobleman. Don't stay here and die a nobody like me.'"

Lottie's face crinkled. The painful memories welled up, still burning after all these years. This painting was a catharsis. "There were wonderful parties in Vienna filled with generals and counts. But d--n it! Only the blue-bloods ever went! And I was just a peasant girl. I had to step in the gutter when those nobles strutted down the street, or get whipped for my nerve!"

Lottie's hand flitted over the final section. Here I could see a bed, people hunched over, working. "Dreams. Pointless dreams. For two long years. But what was I? Just a common seamstress. Living like a mouse behind the tailor shop on five dollars a month. I lay in the dark, in my little room, cursing that I was a peasant, a Jew. That's what kept me from being someone!"

Her narrative had wrung out deep emotional pain. It might overwhelm her to go to another picture immediately. "Grandma, can I have a cup of coffee?" She had none. Instead, she made me the traditional glass of tea. Served it with a stale, flaky strudel. That calmed her. I looked through the open window, to the cluttered fire escape and a burned-out building across the way, listened to the raucous sound of children playing stickball in the street. When she dies, I thought, there will be a deeper downhill



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change in this street. Her presence gives it a real history, a link to a time when there was optimism here.

"Grandma, are you ready to go on?"

"Yes." She took down another painting. I photographed it. This one had a distinct circular movement, like an overhead view of a hurricane. Characters and places went swirling into the vortex. Grandma Lottie pointed to the outermost part of the whirlwind, where the story began.

"Grandma, what do you call this painting?"

"*Steerage*. It is about coming to America. . . . Steerage. Two weeks of lice and filthy peasants, crossing the Atlantic, packed like cattle. The old women grumbled and grew sick sleeping on the iron floor." Lottie once again spoke to herself as much as to me. "But me, I loved it! I loved the million stars over us. I loved the stories that passed among the families, and smelling the lotkas cooking on the little open stoves. I was sixteen. I ate up the misery just as easy as I ate the black bread I carried. Behind me for good were the phony noblemen. Ahead, starting fresh in America. Being free. Getting rich. Being somebody because there were no rules against us Jews. Nothing to hold us down."

John Chodes

Here the painting showed the boat docked alongside crudely drawn skyscrapers and the peasants clambering off, hanging on to their only possessions, their shabby luggage and torn bedrolls.

Grandma Lottie looked at me for the first time since she began her narrative. A puzzled wrinkle cut her forehead. "You know, Johnny-cakes, I see something new from talking out loud. Something I never saw when I was painting. There's opposites in the story. We were all running away from being slaves. Running from the hard rules that kept us bent double. None of us ever knew a day when we could stand up straight. But the weight sat on us so long, it went into our souls. So no matter how fast we ran . . . " Her voice trailed off.

"What do you mean, Grandma?"

"We couldn't escape. It was inside us!"

She turned back to the painting. To a small scene of tightly packed tenements and a network of fire escapes.

"Look. We were in New York. I moved to the Lower East Side. There, each block was like a different country. Avenue A was Russkies. Avenue B for Polacks. We Jews kept Avenue C from the Irish the best we could. We built synagogues and our Jewish theaters . . . I met your grandpa, Izzy, where we both found work. See Johnny, there he is! Grandpa! We sewed hems for two cents a dress in the garment center. I enjoyed life so much, I didn't think it was unfair to work long hours, because I was making four times as much as in Vienna. I felt free and rich. But the long hours hurt my sensitive Izzy. Now Johnny-cakes, here it is, what I'm talking about . . . running from being a slave . . . but I met it here. In Izzy!"

Lottie laughed at the magic of her insight. Her wrinkles exploded into deep fissures. Her gold teeth flashed. "It's so funny. I just see it now. A lifetime too late! . . . My Izzy had talent. I liked that. He was a poet. That's how he protested how the workers were treated. He was a Socialist, always talking about the worker's paradise he was making, where the laws would bring down the greedy bosses. I loved his fire to change the world. So we got married. But I didn't see how different we were, how Izzy believed in what I was running from. I wanted to be rich. To have furs and a big house. Izzy's dream was killing off the rich. Can you imagine that? I fought with him for nearly fifty years and never knew it was because he was what I was running from. It just hit me. Izzy's dream was bringing Vienna here. Only he didn't know it. The *apparatchik* and busybodies who tell people how much they can earn, by taxing all they make —why then, we'd still be peasants."

Lottie put the painting back on the wall. She would not let me help her. She took another down. At 89, she was still independent and feisty. The room seemed very small from being filled with so many canvases. They were everywhere. Behind the frayed couch. Behind the dusty television set.

"But Johnny, it wasn't all struggle and misery. Look here. We had good times together. Some nights we'd go



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John Chodes

dancing till sun-up, then head straight back to work, hardly tired. Our love was better than sleep."

It was all there on the canvas. Lottie and Izzy working. Lottie and Izzy dancing, with a big smudgy yellow moon radiating over them. But the next scene was more obscure. Lottie and Izzy walking hand-in-hand. Small children wandered through the canvas. There was a crude shop. Grandma spoke to the canvas as if trying to reconcile their life together.

"Izzy. We were like oil and water. You, always scribbling those senseless protest poems. We got along until I started nagging you to give me your savings to open the business I always dreamed of. A fabric shop. Of course we lost everything. You didn't give a damn. You hated money. You talked about your poems to the customers, instead of business. But I can't blame you. That's the way you always were. I have no right to be angry."

Grandma Lottie ate the last of her strudel. The front of her dress was speckled with pastry flakes. She brushed them off with a crude brusqueness. "How could I have married a man so opposite?"

"But Grandma, there's a part of you that's just like him. The artistic side. You admired the writer, the fighter, in him. It makes sense. It's just too bad he wasn't fighting for your side."

"Yes. You are right, Johnny-cakes." She seemed relieved. She went into the closet and took out a dust-covered painting that was wedged between dozens of pairs of jumbled old-lady black shoes. She blew the dust off and sneezed. She rested it against the sofa. Her mood changed. Grandma twitched the way old women sometimes do. A sign that she sensed the Reaper's hand on her shoulder and was trying to shake it off.

The painting's locale was this very room. It was all recognizable — the sofa, the narrow windows, and rusted fire escape. Izzy lay on the couch. A Yiddish-language newspaper was open across his chest.

"Izzy," Grandma Lottie began, her words hushed now. "Izzy, it's time for essen. I thought he was taking a nap, but no, he was dead. Sixty-nine years old and all he had to show for it was those cheap hem-cutting tools he neatly put on the dresser. And a trunkful of old worthless poems."

Grandma spoke directly to Izzy on the couch. Some of the paint had peeled off, from being banged and crushed by the jumble of shoes.

"Izzy," she said, "I was so alone the first five years after you died. The children hardly ever came to see me. Every last friend was dead. I was too old to make new ones. I even read your old poems once. They weren't so bad. Izzy, I took up painting because my insides hurt so bad. But I also burned to tell all I had seen and felt."

Once again, Lottie looked at me. "Part of me is in every brush-stroke. My labor pains. The bread lines. My lice-covered clothes during steerage. The three children I brought into the world. The hard cruel times and the good. My whole d--n bitter life."

I was moved. She seemed exhausted. Was it from carrying the pictures or from the emotional strain? I packed my equipment and said I would be back to finish the interview.

A few days later it rained. The weather grew cold, the streets iced over. Grandma Lottie went downstairs for groceries, slipped on the ice, and shattered her hip.

I visited her in the hospital. She did not recognize me. She was heavily sedated. I asked the doctor why the sedation. Was it for pain?

"No," he answered, matter-of-factly, "it is to keep her quiet. She is a real rebel. She thinks she is twenty. She doesn't take crap from any of the staff or the other patients. So we have to do it. For her own good. So she can fit in and get better."

A week later she was dead. I believe she was given an overdose. No rebels allowed.

*John Chodes is a playwright living in New York City. One of Lottie Jonas' paintings was bought by The High Museum of Art in Atlanta, but has since been taken out of their collection.*



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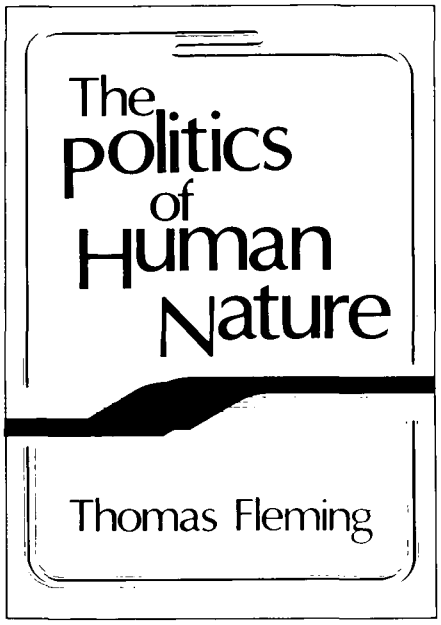


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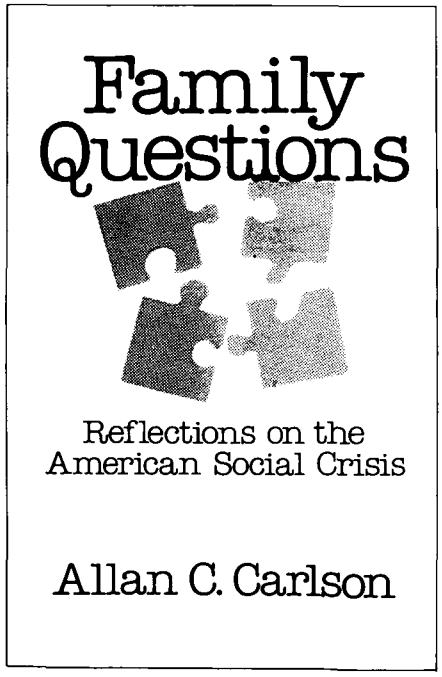


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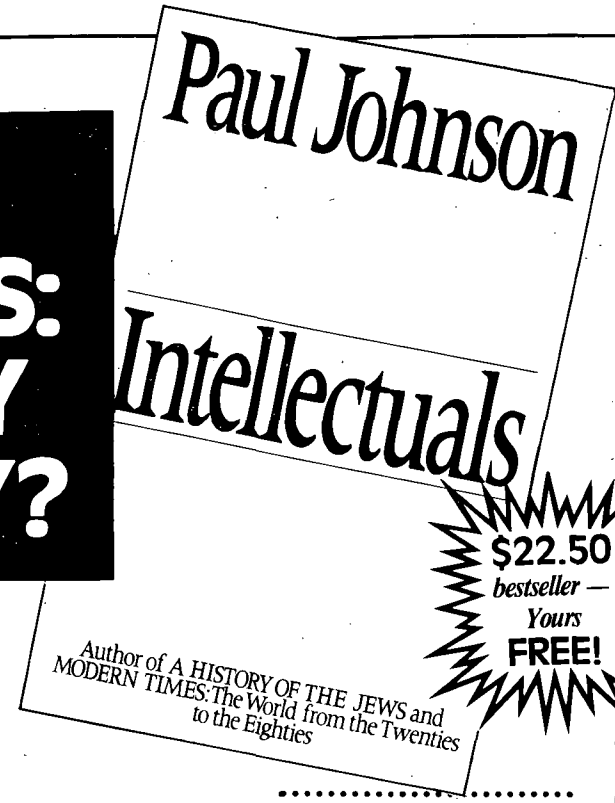


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